

# THE VIKING

ELWYN A. BARRON



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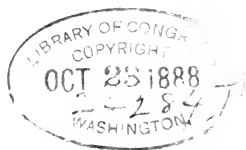


# THE VIKING

BY

ELWYN A. BARRON  
"

*WITH PREFACE BY LAWRENCE BARRETT*



CHICAGO  
A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY  
1888

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## PREFACE.

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WHEN this drama fell into my hands, I was at once so attracted by the subject and the manner of its treatment that I resolved to add the hero to my repertory. But other duties came between my purpose and its accomplishment, and I now despair of it altogether. It would have given me great happiness to add this Northern poet-soldier's figure to that gallery of my original portraits which numbers Lanciotto, King Arthur, Rienzi, Hernani, Lord Tresham, Gringoire, and James Harebell. In such a company I make no doubt the Viking would hold an honorable place. Nor do I despair of yet seeing the play acted by one or other of the gifted tragedians who adorn our stage. Indeed, it is this hope that urges me to encourage the author to give his drama the

impressiveness of print, feeling that by such publicity attention will be more readily drawn to it.

While all dramas are best appreciated when presented upon their proper arena, the stage, there are many which give great pleasure to the reader in book form. This story is so engrossing in its love interest, so fascinating in the group of characters illustrating that story in their lives, so replete with those passages of poetical beauty too often sacrificed to the exigencies of dramatic action, that it will be studied by all classes of readers with rising interest.

Dealing with that region whence sprang so many of the great romances and dramas, the weird and mystical North, this drama depends for its attractiveness upon the same means as those which the greatest of all dramatists used in "Hamlet" and "Macbeth."

While we can hardly admit that it was only in "days of old" that "knights were bold," we cannot deny that where Wagner has led us by his original genius into a new appreciation of art, as illustrated in the great list of his

operas, and where the greatest living prose writers have found a fruitful field of inspiration, the dramatic poet may look, and gain sympathetic and wise readers for a play which treats of men and women who inhabited the same mystical region.

In welcoming a new dramatist to the American stage, and in presenting his work with whatever value my own hearty endorsement may carry, I have a hope that the reading public will rate the poem as highly as I do; and, above all, that this may be the means of drawing such attention to "The Viking" as will warrant its production by one of our accomplished actors upon its proper arena, the stage.

LAWRENCE BARRETT.

SOUTHBOROUGH, MASS.,

*August 4, 1888.*



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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- HAFTHOR . . . *A young Dane living at the Court of Norway.*  
HAROLD II. . . *King of Norway.*  
EYVIND . . . *Uncle and Counsellor to Harold.*  
IVAR . . . . . *Cousin to Harold, a rejected lover of Fenja.*  
THORD . . . . . *A young chief of Harold's army, in love with Eysa.*  
SWEND . . . . . *The aged King of Sweden.*  
GURTH . . . . . *An old Harper.*  
ERIC . . . . . *Friend and armor-bearer to Hafthor.*  
OLIF . . . . . *Swend's envoy.*  
FENJA . . . . . *Sister to Harold, in love with Hafthor.*  
EYSA . . . . . *Friend and companion to Fenja.*

*Warriors, Harpers, Dancing Youths, Slaves, Hunters, etc.*

TIME, 976 A.D. — SCENE, NORWAY.

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ACTS I. AND II. — EARLY WINTER.

III. AND IV. — EARLY SUMMER.





# THE VIKING.

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## Act First.

SCENE. — *A room in the king's palace, open at rear, with columns between which hang curtains of skins. Low stairway right, door left. Right of centre, fire-place, before which a couch of skins. At right of first entrance a heavy tapestry-frame, with work, before which a stool. At left a table with chairs. GURTH sits at centre, playing. FENJA working at tapestry. EYSA reclines on couch. EYVIND sits at table left, with a boy cup-bearer standing near, who hands him drinking-horn at pleasure. Near the portières, two or three white slaves, bearded men. About the room hang trophies of war and the chase. At left, a rude statue of Freya, the Norwegian Venus. GURTH sings and plays with attempt at fire and force.*

GURTH.

“Then strove the beast Grendel, with rage,  
To tear the flesh from Beowulf's throat.  
A fearful terror filled the hall,  
The pale ale flowed upon the floor  
And mingled with the spillen blood  
The horrid beast drew from his veins.

It was great wonder that the hall  
Withstood the shock, nor fell to earth ;  
But builded fast was that good pile.  
The foul wretch knew the viking great  
Would burst the junctures of his bones ;  
And well he saw the end of life,  
And fierce resented his defeat."

EYVIND (*interrupting with impatience*).

Have done ! It hurts me to the heart. By Tyr !  
There are no skalds in Norway any more —  
[*Seeing FENJA's look.*  
Save one. I grant you Hafthor sings right well ;  
But you, dull master —

FENJA.

Softly, Uncle.

EYVIND.

Well,  
The girl is right. Gray hairs deserve respect.  
And it was not so long ago, 't is true,  
That you had voice to win applause, old Gurth,  
Against a court of gleemen, whose brave tales  
Were wont delight us more than song. Take seat.  
Belike I'm wrong to chide at age, myself  
So old a child may number off my days.  
But few of us are wise enough, good friend,  
To see in other's aspects what we are.  
Lay off your harp. Take drink.

GURTH.

I thank you, sir.

FENJA (*coming behind GURTH and placing her hand comfortably on his shoulder*).

Be not concerned for what he says, good Gurth.  
 An hundred times I've heard him praise your skill,  
 And rail that younger and less worthy men  
 Should put your reverence to blush.

[GURTH *kisses her hand*.

EYSA.

And I.

It is a pastime much delights him, — much;  
 He dearly loves to rail, not meaning.

EYVIND.

How!

What's to do! Explained! Excused! Unravelled!  
 I put under interpretation! Death!  
 'T were good, sweet mistress, I change beards with  
 you.  
 I knew not wisdom loved so smooth a way!

FENJA (*going to EYVIND*).

Nay, be merry! I'll not be ruled by frowns;  
 You know my disposition.

EYVIND.

Froward minx!

EYSA.

How often have I said the same, when she,  
Imperious of birth, has put aside  
A maid's becoming virtue, modesty,  
To speak where silence was her debt.

[EYVIND *shows playful resentment of what EYSA says. He gently pulls FENJA by the arm, who slips down at his knees.*

FENJA.

You hear?

EYVIND.

Thou golden sunlight of my silvered age!  
The great earth smiling to its gladful rim  
Holds nothing lovelier to sight or sense.  
Well do I know your virtues and your worth;  
And when the gods requite me for my life,  
I still must sorrow leaving thee behind.

FENJA.

Far be that hour from us! Do you not know  
What said the Nornes to my dear mother once, —  
That you should fix a crown about my brow?  
What crown may I expect but that white wreath  
Our women twine about the virgin dead  
Who step from life when spring is fresh a-bloom?

EYSA.

Oh, there are kings enough where beauty lures.

EYVIND.

Well said. And hers is beauty for a king.

FENJA.

My beauty is a part of me impact, and I —  
[*Aside.*] Though I may wed a king, he sits no  
throne.

GURTH.

Sweet lady, you, the daughter of a king,  
And even sister to another —

FENJA.

Should hold myself for goodly merchandise?  
And so I do — if I sell where I like.

EYVIND.

The only likes a loyal subject knows  
Spring from the royal master's will. Take heed!  
Let not your heart be sporting-ground for Love,  
Before the king has tapped him on the back.

EYSA.

The king, her father, long since cared for that.

EYVIND.

Long since, indeed. That king, my brother, 's dead,  
The king, her brother, reigns; and I have found  
That ev'ry king is monarch for himself.

The fashion of the sire suits not the son.

[EYVIND *takes drink, and then arises and goes round to GURTH.*

FENJA.

I do not fear.

[*Returns to tapestry.*

EYSA.

Else were you not so bold.

EYVIND (*assisting GURTH*).

Come, time-hurt minstrel, we will hence to eat.

[*Exeunt.*

FENJA.

I bold! In what?

EYSA (*looking over FENJA's shoulder*).

And do you think, Fenja,

'T is only love-lit eyes can see Love's trace?

You like not work, and yet, industrious,

You bend unwearied to this task. Tell me,

Is there no special likeness woven here?

FENJA.

I cannot think there is; and yet, indeed,

It seems there's something noble in the face

I've noted other where. [*Musing.*] I cannot say.

EYSA.

Will you weave in the harp?

FENJA.

The harp? What harp?

EYSA.

It were not Hafthor, wanting Hafthor's harp.

FENJA.

Hafthor!

EYSA.

Hafthor.

FENJA.

You see with fancy's eye.

EYSA.

Not so. I see with friendship's faithful eye.

FENJA.

Then must you own your thought has done me  
wrong;

For note you, here are sword and shield and  
spear.

Are these the servants of the poet's art?

EYSA.

Alas ! Love locks the heart of confidence,  
Though from the cradle we had been as one.

FENJA (*turning to dismiss slaves, and then caressing EYSA*).

So shall we ever. You are right, dear friend.  
This frame is but a mirror of my soul ;  
The silvered figure woven there reflects  
The image that I worship in my heart.  
And yet I've come to fear mischance of late.  
My brother, whom in double sense I must  
In ev'rything obey, looks strange, is harsh,  
Oft hints of plans to benefit the State,  
And turns unkindly eyes where once he liked.  
I know not why, but surely some sad change  
Has fallen on him. What it may portend  
I tremble but to guess. He means, I fear,  
To slight my father's wish, and have me wed  
To serve some reaching purpose of his own.  
I do believe my uncle thinks so too.

EYSA.

What reason have you so to doubt?

FENJA.

None clear,  
But when did ever woman's love-tuned heart  
Need reasons to arouse alarm? We feel,



As tender plants presage the storm, the hurt  
That smiling Fortune means to give.

EYSA.

Have cheer.

We must be sometime anxious of the fate  
That only is the shadow of our ill  
From over-feeding or from over-thought ;  
I've suffered so.

FENJA.

Through love?

EYSA.

Through eating much.

It weighs upon the mind. But as for love,  
The gods have been most kind to me in that.

FENJA.

I knew it! Tell me how.

EYSA.

Why, simply thus, —

By sealing up my heart against the plague.

FENJA.

Sweet scoffer! But I'm not so blind. I know  
Your lips are blushing traitors to your heart.

EYSA.

Then punish them with kisses. Come !

[THORD, *dressed as a hunter*, enters.]

FENJA (*kissing EYSA fondly*).

You rogue !

THORD.

Proclaim the crime ; let me but know the sin  
That breeds such penalty, and I 'll offend !  
By iron-handed Tyr ! I hold it wrong  
That I am innocent of cause for that ;  
So punish me for my unfitness.

FENJA.

Sir,

It might be made some fault that you rush in  
Unmannerly upon our peace.

EYSA.

Manners !

These reckless rovers of the woods are like  
The savage beasts they hunt.

THORD.

What think you now ?

Does she not flatter me to scorn herself ?

FENJA.

You mean ?

THORD.

What else but that in eager chase  
I follow after her good-will.

EYSA.

Well said.  
You follow after, truly. You should know,  
Ever to follow is ne'er to o'ertake.

THORD.

Then I'll mend my pace.

FENJA.

Do. 'T will serve you.

EYSA.

There's equal danger in excess of zeal;  
Much better you were dull than troublesome.

THORD.

But keep yourself from cover, run me fair,  
And I will neither slack nor overleap.

EYSA.

And has your forestry not taught you yet  
The hind helps not the hunter?

THORD.

True; but you —

EYSA (*bowing and moving away*).

Be not you deceived ;  
I will not easier be caught than deer,  
Hunt me as you may.

FENJA (*to THORD*).

Are you come alone?

THORD.

Not lone, though I made foolish haste ahead.  
It seemed an age to me that we were gone ;  
And now I learn it was but ten short days.

FENJA.

Let not appearances dismay your heart.  
Time runs no faster in deserted court  
Than in the jocund wood alive with sport.  
You've heard that said.

[EYSA *looks back, pauses, then exit.*

THORD.

I well remember once,  
When I had hope to win the silver shield,  
Yet did not drive my arrow through the wand  
The victor pierced, you sought to comfort me.  
“'Tis not the metal of the shield,” said you,  
“That makes the warrior, but the heart beneath.”

FENJA.

Yes, so I did. What then? Was I not right?

THORD.

Most right. Yet, ne'ertheless, I grieved my lot, —  
Not for I lost the shield, but missed the mark.

FENJA.

Put off your similes and speak your thought.

THORD.

I have no wish, fair Fenja, by your leave,  
To gain your further gracious sympathy  
By sending errant shaft for this fond prize.

FENJA.

I thought you had some grievous tale to tell.  
You have no need to fear. Be bold ; press on.  
If I know womankind, she loves.

THORD.

Is 't true?

But how to make her own it? Show me that !

FENJA.

Until you find the way, confess yourself  
No more than half a lover. Tell me, now,  
How fared the hunt?

THORD.

Most royally.

FENJA.

Large game?

THORD.

The best ; among the lot three monster bears.

FENJA.

Then is the king, my brother, in good cheer?

THORD.

As jovial as a monarch should be. Hark !  
Mark you that strain ?

FENJA (*not listening*).

Yes. 'Tis Gurth. He plays  
To please my uncle.

THORD.

Let who will be pleased,  
Gurth never played like that. 'Tis Hafthor's hand.  
[FENJA *shows pleasure*.

THORD (*going up*).

I'll have him hither. [*Calls.*] Hafthor ! Ho ! I say !

HAFTHOR (*without*).

What, ho !

THORD (*calling off*).

Come hither.

[*Returning down.*

He it was each night  
Made light the day's fatigue and crowned our sport.  
No other equals him for song or tale.

HAFTHOR (*entering*).

What noisy rascal calls to stop my play?

THORD.

This lady, sir.

[*Bowing toward FENJA.*

FENJA (*piqued*).

Be honest, sir, I pray.

[*Gets drinking-horn and offers drink to HAFTHOR.*

THORD.

I speak but truth. For am I not your slave?

Then what I have is yours, my voice and all.

So when I call I use your voice ; therefore,

You call —

[*Re-enter EYSA and EYVIND.*

HAFTHOR.

A knavish argument. Fair one, [*To FENJA.*]

I would that I might think he spoke your wish.

FENJA.

I'm very glad you are returned.

HAFTHOR.

In heart?

FENJA.

In truth.

HAFTHOR (*kissing FENJA's hand*).

My dreams have taught me how to read your words.

EYVIND.

A pretty courtesy. [*To THORD.*] Is't not?

THORD.

I would all women were as kind.

EYSA.

They were,  
Had all men equal worth.

EYVIND.

Men are, I think,  
What women make them.

HAFTHOR.

Say not so, or else  
The world would teem with loveliness. Good sir,  
Your years may treble mine, yet I have found  
'Tis easier to quell a savage beast  
Than rule the disposition of a man.

EYVIND.

Brave words, indeed, for look you what they  
mean :

A wild barbarian Dane, a savage born,  
Made captive in our ocean wars, stands here  
Domesticated to the harp because  
Love rules his disposition !



HAFTHOR.

Good Eyvind,  
In one thing let me guide your memory, —  
You somewhat clash the father with the son.  
My father was defeated in your wars,  
And paid the forfeit of his overthrow  
By serving here in Norway that good king  
Who was this lady's sire. But I came, *free*,  
To light my father's cares. I pleased the king,  
Who loved my art, and — since a gentle peace  
Rained flowers 'twixt here and there — I e'en  
    stayed on  
When both our sires were dead.

FENJA.

    You say aright —  
[*Aside.*] And might with truth say more.

EYVIND.

    I do recall  
You were a saucy youth, full of quick pride.

THORD.

And full of ev'ry other excellence.

EYSA (*to* THORD).

Then pride 's an excellence?

THORD.

When well put on,  
And worn with modest dignity — not scorn !  
[THORD and EYSA exeunt.]

EYVIND (*coming gravely but kindly forward, taking  
FENJA'S and HAFTHOR'S hands, and standing  
between them looking from one to the other*).

Fair youths, unscarred by care, unmarked by  
grief, —

The grace of lilies and the strength of oak, —

You throw some warmth into my frost-touched  
soul,

And make me think the sad earth beautiful.

Mind not my words ; you know I love you well,

Would see you happy, prosperous, content.

But green ambition heeds not sated age ;

The king has turned aspiring.

HAFTHOR.

What mean you ?

EYVIND.

I may not say.

FENJA.

Beseech you, Uncle, do.

EYVIND (*to HAFTHOR*).

If hint will do you service, you must know

You have an enemy in Ivar, who

Of late, since Fenja slighted off his love,  
Has dripped some poison into Harold's ear.  
The king comes here anon. Methought but now  
I heard the parley of his horn. Sound him.  
Prefer your cause, and mark if all is well.  
Perchance my mind has lost its one time skill  
To sift with nicety the speech of men  
For hidden motives. I may do him wrong.

## HAFTHOR.

Be sure you do, though I know not your thought.  
But if you think the king esteems me less  
Than in the spring-time of our youthful love,  
'T were good you had a picture of our life  
These ten days gone, when we pursued the chase.  
About the fire at eve, his one delight  
Seemed but to have me near him, list my play,  
Or greedy lend his ear to hear me sing ;  
And far into the night, till Odin's star  
Sometimes began to pale into the dawn,  
He lay with me upon my couch of skins  
To talk of happy days long gone, or beg  
That I would thrill him with strange tales of  
times

When our great gods were heroes of the world.  
And in such way he told me that his heart  
Enlarged to cherish me in its embrace  
As I were brother to his soul. Think not  
The king has other thought of me than love's !

EYVIND.

Hold to your faith, but — try the king.

HAFTHOR.

I will,

If for no other purpose than to chide  
The rank suspicion of uneasy age.

EYVIND.

How rich in good opinion of the world  
Are they who have not made their fortune's trial!  
[EYVIND sits at table. Presently he sleeps.]

HAFTHOR.

This little hand in mine throbs as I've felt  
A frightened bird. You tremble and look wan.  
You are not ill?

FENJA.

Not ill, but boding ill.  
I have a burden weighs upon me here,  
As though a sea of tears had drowned my heart.

HAFTHOR.

Sit here. And if I may, I'll lie at length  
Where I can upward look to catch the light  
That streams through those clear windows of your  
soul.  
What do you fear?

FENJA.

Just what my uncle does.

HAFTHOR.

Dear heart, the fact and image of young truth,  
Know you what fond confession fills your speech?  
Know you what my quick-beating heart receives  
In sweet assurance from your fears? Blush not.  
Turn not your eyes away. The violet  
Has nothing lovelier to woo the gaze.  
You heard what Eyvind did advise?

FENJA.

I heard ;

And that it was confirmed my fears.

HAFTHOR.

Well, then,

Though I in no wise share your doubts, I'll speak ;  
But ere I do, sweet Fenja, let your voice  
Pour in my thirsty ears refreshing words  
To seal the testimony of your eyes.  
When your great father lay upon death's couch,  
And saw the fateful Sisters beckon him,  
He called me to his side, and took my hand  
To clasp it in with yours. Nay, do not weep.  
You know what I would say. I'll not go on.  
Our lives were all but wedded in that clasp ;  
And yet we never have to purpose talked  
Of what I know we both alike have felt, —  
A restful, peaceful, holy love. Answer.

FENJA.

What question have you put to me?

HAFTHOR.

Fair cheat!

What matter words when soul leaps into sound?

And yet I'll not leave you excuse to say

I lacked the valor of my wish. Fenja, —

What well you know, if I have never said, —

You are to me the very sum of life,

The builded and the building joys of youth, —

A grateful memory and gladsome hope.

Colder than naked winter were my life

Stripped of the sunny comfort of your love.

[*A horn sounds. HAFTHOR and FENJA arise.*

HAFTHOR.

List! The king draws near. Take thought; then  
answer.

Say I may tell to him our mutual love,

And beg him to endow me with your hand.

FENJA (*yielding to his embrace*).

My soul, which lends herself to you complete,

Is languid with extreme delight.

HAFTHOR.

And mine,

Made free, swells to a tempest of mad joy.

My purpose now to wear the pearl I've won!

[*Noise without. FENJA moves away from HAFTHOR  
to tapestry.*

EYVIND (*waking*).

Hey, now ! Who knocks against my dreams ? The king.

None other has so rude a way with him.

Remember, Hafthor, as I cautioned you,

The roughest wooer thrives with fortune best.

[ *With noise and confusion, bearing bows, spears, and implements of the chase, enter HAROLD, IVAR, and other hunters. Slaves follow, bearing game, with which they exeunt at left.*

HAROLD.

Where lurks the traitor ? Have him forth at once !

Ha ! There he stands without a look of shame,

And, by my bloody hand, he smiles !

HAFTHOR.

Why not ?

What cause for sadness hangs about my neck ?

HAROLD.

Think you, Sir Skald, 't is well to fail your king,

When he would have your song to chant success,

And head his hardy hunters coming home ?

[ *Flings bow on table.*

IVAR.

I think, good cousin, he sought other game.

Where the doe runs, the roe — you know the tag.

HAFTHOR.

I had no part in what wild stuff ye killed ;  
And when ye fell to fighting for your shares,  
I kept along my pace which led me here.

IVAR.

Not to bad purpose, either.

HAROLD.

Well, note this, —  
I'll clip some forfeit from you for the trick.  
[*To slaves.*] Fetch drink ; and let there be enough.  
We thirst.

CUP-BEARER.

It is at hand, good Harold.

HAROLD.

Friends, fill round.  
There's nothing better after sport than drink.  
It nerves the weak, makes the poor dullard wise,  
And noble natures emulate the gods.  
[*They gather at the table.*]

IVAR (*to* HAFTHOR).

Will you not sit with us?

HAFTHOR.

'Tis not, Sir Jarl,  
The privilege allowed to me.



HAROLD.

Make free ;  
He 's nearest to my heart who drinks most mead.

IVAR (*to HAFTHOR, aside*).

What ! Say you so, who stand so favored here  
To have the king's fair sister fashion you ?  
[*Indicating tapestry.*]

HAFTHOR.

Peace, envious lord. I know you what you are ;  
Your cunning lacks the wit to hide itself.  
I 'd rather have my living heart pierced through  
By gnawing worms, each worm a mortal pang,  
Than have my mind a prey to envy.

IVAR.

Gods !

Do you dare say this to me ?

HAFTHOR.

Do I dare ?

HAROLD.

Come, Ivar, come ; take place.

IVAR (*to HAFTHOR*).

You shall repent.

[HAFTHOR, *contemptuous*, goes to FENJA. IVAR goes  
*angrily to place at table.*]

HAFTHOR (*to FENJA*).

I see your grief. 'T is very strange indeed  
That your good brother takes no note of you.  
He's vexed, I know; but if with me, 't will pass.  
'T were best that you go hence. But go not far,  
For if occasion offer, I will speak;  
And if you will, I'd have you kneel with me  
To give my pleading favor.

FENJA.

I will withdraw;  
But, friend, I think it wise you should not speak,  
At least, not now. Choose out a fitter time.

HAFTHOR.

Trust all to me. I will such course pursue  
As judgment points.

[FENJA *moves up stage*.]

HAROLD.

Observe, my valiant friends,  
My father's daughter scorns my father's son.

FENJA.

I've known my father's son more kind.

HAROLD.

Most like.  
And there were times, sweet mistress, I recall,  
When king and brother, bridging absence home  
Found cheerful welcome at your hands.

FENJA.

My hands,  
And better than my hands, my grateful heart,  
Are ever ready for your pleased return.

EYVIND.

A gentle answer, King.

IVAR.

And gracious, too.  
Unless there's something subtle in that "pleased."

HAROLD.

Retire in peace. I'll speak my love anon.  
I drink this draught to you.  
[*He bows and drinks to FENJA, who kisses her hand to him.*]

FENJA.

There's a pledge to you  
Until such hour as I may better it.  
[*Exit by stairs.*]

HAROLD (*aside*).

I hardly have it in my heart to dash  
Her gentle nature's hope to earth — yet must.  
[*Sits. HAFTHOR plays his harp softly.*]

HAROLD (*to EYVIND*).

What think you of my strong bow?

EYVIND (*musingly*).

'T is nothing ;

Or else, not such as I would highly praise.  
I do remember, in my lusty youth  
From sweating ash I carved me out a bow  
No two of ye could bend. A goodly bow,  
That bore a shaft would be a spear to-day, —  
No household toy like this.

Ah, well ; Thor lives !

The gods cannot be always making men.  
I have some pity of ye.

[*Drinks.*

HAROLD.

Right well said,

Good uncle. Drink as bravely as you lie,  
And we shall not lack rare entertainment.

EYVIND.

It is a foolish knave finds cause for mirth  
In ills or follies of old age.

HAROLD.

Drive on !

I'm in the humor to be chid. Be free !  
Spare not to wound me with a waspish tongue.  
Come, now, throw pointed maxims at my head.

EYVIND.

I waste no wisdom on a king in cups.  
The scarecrow Prudence guards my winter's wit.

HAROLD.

The rein your gray beard shows ill worth. Drink  
more,  
And summer plenty will make prudence stale.  
[To IVAR.] Mark you that tune the wily harper  
plays?

IVAR.

'T is something new to me.

HAROLD.

The crafty rogue!  
He plays it but to work upon my mind.  
Be sure there is some favor he will beg.

IVAR.

Prize you this harper?

HAROLD.

Dearly as my sword —  
Save for one thing.

IVAR.

And that thing is?

HAROLD (*who looks at IVAR intently, then changes  
manner, and arising from table, comes forward*).

Hafthor,

Your music frets me, though 't is sweetly played.  
My spirit will not drink delight to-day.

HAFTHOR (*rising*).

Then is it fit for serious thought, my king.  
By your most gracious leave, I claim your ear,  
Indulgent patron of an humble suit  
That long neglect has served to dignify.

[HAFTHOR *goes up to stair, calling.*

Come, Fenja, come.

HAROLD.

What solemn jest is this?

[*Aside.*] Does he suspect? What matter? I'm  
resolved.

[*Enter FENJA, takes HAFTHOR's hand.*

Besides, who may hold me accountable?

IVAR (*aside*).

If only this string-clawing, chanting knave  
Were tripped from favor of the king, my way  
Were simple, and my triumph sure.

HAFTHOR.

My lord,

You once knew well your noble father's wish  
For me and this dear maid. I've waited on  
In hopeful patience these three years that you  
Might please to take some notice of his will.  
But from your mind — like night's dew from a  
brand,  
Beneath the burning passion of the sun —

Remembrance of that time has vanished,  
 Sapped by the blaze of your ambition. See.  
   [HAFTHOR and FENJA kneel.  
 We pray you call it back again.

HAROLD (*taking FENJA's hand*).

Arise!

My father's daughter has no cause to kneel.  
 To you, Sir Harper, — keep your knee, — a word :  
 When kings show disposition to forget,  
 'T were well their slaves leave memory a blank!

HAFTHOR (*springing up in anger*).

And do you, then, call Hafthor slave?

FENJA.

Hafthor!

Provoke him not to anger.

HAROLD (*to FENJA*).

Do not fear.

The strong need not be angry with the weak  
 For blustering. Your uncle waits you there.  
 [*To HAFTHOR.*] 'T is true you are no slave; but  
                   what are you  
 To ask the daughter of a king to wife?  
 My father was a dotard when he died.  
 What have you done to win a royal bride?  
 The royal raiment is the robe that blood  
 Of foes empurples. You but sing of war;  
 Win love by slaughter.

HAFTHOR.

So I will, if let.

Were I to boast my courage, some do know  
My right to say, "With these unweaponed hands  
I slew the savage beast this coat adorned."  
But I have soul for battle, and a sword  
The king's own hand might proudly grasp!  
And for my love I challenge who will fight.

IVAR.

A beggar's challenge to the noble world.  
[*Comes forward.*]

HAFTHOR.

My sword is royal, be I what I may,  
And has an edge to taste of noble blood.

HAROLD.

I pray you lead my sister hence, Ivar.

IVAR.

Without an answer to this knave?

HAROLD.

Away.

FENJA.

I do implore you, Brother.



HAROLD.

Vex me not.

[IVAR and FENJA *exeunt*.

[*To HAFTHOR.*] I find you bolder than I thought.

But note :

You come upon me when I 'm wrought in mind  
With matters of great moment to the crown.  
I do not care that you are lowly cast, —  
For valor is worth more than high descent, —  
But there are weighty reasons for delay  
That must be balanced, though I lean to you.  
So hold me still in friendship for a week,  
The while these several matters come to head.

HAFTHOR.

I take some comfort from your change of speech,  
And will await your time ; but on the time  
Be you prepared to speak me fair.

HAROLD.

A threat?

HAFTHOR.

If you will understand it so.

HAROLD.

How now !

Think you 't is wise to fret my good resolve?

HAFTHOR.

I think it safe to warn your ill intent.  
You've touched the love I bore you with rude  
doubt;  
And if you play me false —

HAROLD.

What will you then?

HAFTHOR.

Prompt you remember, in the tides of time  
Kings have been held accountable to slaves.  
[*Exit. Hunters rise from table.*

FIRST HUNTER.

Is not this a villain, mighty Harold?

SECOND HUNTER.

Shall he live on who levels threat at you?

HAROLD.

I thank you, friends, for your well meaning. Go!  
But in no wise do harm or slight to him.  
[*HAROLD waves them away, and they go out saluting.*  
HAROLD paces moodily, observed by EYVIND.

EYVIND (*after a pause*).

Much of a man, it seems to me, this skald,  
This yellow-bearded Hafthor. By Baldúr!

I do like him well. [*To slave.*] Reach me yonder  
horn.

Or I mistake, he 's worth a tribe of Swedes.  
[*Drinks.*]

HAROLD.

For harp and rime, I grant you ; not for arms.

EYVIND.

That 's not to say for one whose beard is new,  
Whose youthful sinews love the chase, whose eyes  
I 've seen shoot joyous fire, when in high mood  
He sang of glorious battle. Time for him.  
I warrant you will find his veins are filled  
With life-blood of brave foemen doomed to die,  
If chance makes viking of the skald.

HAROLD.

Uncle,

I well esteem the goodly youth, but know,  
I 'm not too well secured upon the throne.  
The watchful gods have warned me of a foe  
That will o'ertop me, drive me from the land,  
Unless I join another strength to mine.

EYVIND.

And what make you from this?

HAROLD.

Is 't hard to read?

What foe but Denmark need I fear? What strength  
But Sweden's may I join to mine?

EYVIND.

The gods

So said?

HAROLD.

Unworthy of great Odin's care  
Would be the king incapable to see  
The meaning of the gods in speech so clear.

EYVIND.

These Danes have grown the terror of the earth.

HAROLD.

The greater glory in o'erwhelming them.

EYVIND.

You are resolved?

HAROLD.

I'm sick to death of peace,  
And if the Swedish king will lend me men,  
I'll fight for pastime. There should never be  
Two Harolds in the world at once; and him,  
The Harold of the Danes, I long to crush.

EYVIND.

When comes your answer from the Swedes?

HAROLD.

I hope  
Before the moon has changed. But come with me.

I have a plan to lay before your views,  
And yet have mind to be where I may rest.

EYVIND.

Then lend me here your arm. I find it strange  
Wine ever fills my legs with doubt before  
It mounts into my head.

HAROLD.

You drink right well.

EYVIND.

I think in all of Norway, young or old,  
There is no man my equal.

HAROLD.

You say true.

[*As they retire, HAFTHOR appears, centre, holding back curtain, looking after them.*

HAFTHOR (*entering slowly*).

Belike I was in fault to use rude speech.  
I still have found him frank ; and even now  
His words were creamed with fairness. I was  
wrong,  
And nothing more becomes a man who knows  
His fault than prompt repairment of the wrong.  
I'll in, and ask his pardon.

[*Starts forward as THORD enters hurriedly.*

THORD.

Heard you not  
My call to you?

HAFTHOR.

I heard you not. What's strange?  
The color has escaped your face ; your eyes  
Are outward sentinels of fear. Speak out !

THORD.

There's treachery afoot. Some minutes gone,  
By favoring chance I came where Ivar talked  
With other two of his own breed, of plans  
That seem well under way, the short of which  
Is most important matter to yourself.

HAFTHOR.

What said the knave?

THORD.

I overheard him say  
That Harold has made formal overture  
To old King Swend of Sweden to unite  
With him to wage a universal war ;  
And that for bond between them he would give  
His sister Fenja to old Swend for wife.

HAFTHOR.

Is 't possible ! I'll tent him for the truth.  
I'll drag his lying heart into the light.

THORD.

Rage will avail you nothing. Bide your time.  
Your wits must serve you here.

[IVAR enters unseen.

HAFTHOR.

You 're in the right.

When treachery puts smiling face to view,  
Honesty's self must wear a false outlook.  
We must use other means than forward rage.  
I have a thought I 'll tell to you anon,  
Wherein if you will aid me I will thrive.  
But swear, my friend, my well-tried, trusted friend,  
That you will hold in silence what I say.

[IVAR goes to left upper entrance, opens door, and  
beckons. FENJA and EYSA, entering by stairs,  
descend to foot and there stop in surprise,  
HAROLD comes into view, without his trap-  
pings.

THORD.

By all Walhalla's host, I swear!

HAROLD (*coming forward*).

Well sworn.

There must be fealty under such an oath.  
Is it the king's affair you 're pledged to serve?

HAFTHOR.

It was to honor that he pledged himself, —  
That precious amulet with which the gods

Shield manhood from all taint of wickedness.  
How, then, is it affair of yours, false friend,  
A counterfeiting king, a trickster, cheat —

## HAROLD.

By Odin ! I am richer than I knew.  
I've heard that in the countries of the East  
My brother monarchs entertain their spleen  
With gibe and quip and privileged retort  
Of well-kept fools, who serve no other end.  
But here have I a treasure, who by turns  
Is fool or harper, gleeman or brave skald.  
By all Walhalla's host, as Thord has sworn,  
I'd not exchange him for a world of slaves.  
[HAFTHOR takes his harp from his back, snatches  
sword from THORD's belt and draws its edge  
across harp-strings, severs them, and flings  
frame aside.]

HAFTHOR (*kissing sword*).

I'll be a skald no more ! And, oh, ye gods  
That scourge the heavens with your wrathful fires,  
Pour through my torpid veins your burning flood,  
And wake the sleeping warrior in my soul !  
[To HAROLD.] If I have been your fool, I'll be  
your scourge,  
And plant such bitterness within your life  
That all your after-years shall not find joys  
To win your heart to laughter. Have your day ;



But, by the oracle within my breast,  
I tell you to your face, I'll master you!

HAROLD (*laughing*).

A prize! I never knew his worth till now!

## Act Second.

SCENE. — *A banquet hall. Uncovered oaken table, with benches along each side, and a chair at either end. Walls hung with armor, skins, deer-horns, — a general show of barbaric splendor. Scene opens with slaves passing in and out, preparing table. In the midst of this EYVIND enters, bustling, supervising. Up stage a statue of Odin sustaining a spear.*

EYVIND (*to slaves*).

Be agile, for it lacks but half an hour.  
Make sure there 's drink in plenty. I am told  
These Swedes have most prodigious bellies for 't.  
I know no other virtue that they have ;  
Right well it were we minister to that.  
And bear in mind my charge about the meat :  
Let it come lightly done ; let it run blood.  
I would not have dry flesh served out to them  
For half the value of my nephew's realm ;  
It were not courtesy. And for the mead,  
Give it an extra bounty of hot spice, —  
For so there may be hope to reach their wit.  
But, by my beard ! What ganglot has forgot  
To place a cap of leaves on Odin's spear ?  
Know ye not this is a feast of peace ?  
Go you and make amend. All else looks well.  
[ *While EYVIND is busy, enter HAFTHOR, closely followed by IVAR.*

HAFTHOR.

There can be nothing common 'twixt us, Sir,  
That takes of pleasant nature or good-will.

IVAR.

How know you that before my purpose shows?  
I have a wish to make us better friends.

HAFTHOR.

You have my answer.

IVAR.

All too quickly made.  
Hear first what I would offer, then reply.

EYVIND (*coming forward*).

May strength dwell in your bones, young gentlemen!  
And you, fair master, where have you been hid  
These five days gone? We 've missed you at the  
court.

HAFTHOR.

Am I so fair a figure to the eye  
That my eclipse makes difference at court?

EYVIND.

Be that as 't may, the king has asked for you;  
And if Loki has not got him in hand,  
Hel owns more devils than are known to me.

IVAR.

'Twixt some wild plans and much excess of drink  
He has indeed become another man.

EYVIND.

That might be dured; but heard you where you  
were

What goes apace to-day? The Swedes have come.  
Five swinish beasts as e'er I looked upon.

IVAR.

His speech of Swedes denotes an embassy.  
Are you acquainted what their mission is?

EYVIND.

Mission! Plagues, pestilence, and foul fiends!  
Lay not a noble office on these churls.  
They come to trade some thousands of their breed  
For our fair Lady Fenja, — toads for gems!  
I glory in brave war, but 't is not brave  
To purchase foreign minions at such price.

IVAR (*to HAFTHOR*).

You see the king has critics of his course.

EYVIND.

Were I but young, and of my stamp could choose  
An hundred, he would have opposers too.

[*Exit EYVIND.*]

IVAR.

Did you take meaning from our gran'ther's boast?

HAFTHOR.

Since you will not know silence for reproof,  
What is your business with me?

IVAR.

Why this ;  
Though you and I have never been dear friends,  
Our fancies have inclined the self-same way —

HAFTHOR.

The gods forbid that ever thought of mine  
Should shape its fancy to a like of yours.

IVAR.

I speak the less of likes than interests.  
Since friendly speech offends you, I will be  
Direct and plain in what I have to say.

HAFTHOR.

And brief. You cannot be too curt of speech.

IVAR.

The king's plan to unite the Swedes with us  
By marriage of his sister to old Swend  
Is not more hateful to your mind and mine  
Than 't is to minds of all who learn of it.  
You noted how old Eyvind took it now,  
And others I have heard exceed protest.

HAFTHOR (*moving away*).

Your gossip trips my patience. These are things  
That do not rightly please me at your tongue.

IVAR.

I might be bold to say, though scorned by her  
In wayward fashion, I prize Fenja, too.

[HAFTHOR *stops*.

Yet I have other dearer interests :  
I prize ambition loftier than love ;  
I see a pathway to the throne, and you  
Would scorn a kingdom to possess a girl.  
There is one obstacle before us both  
Which neither of us can subdue alone.  
Though hating each, we might for profit join.  
The people love you ; I as jarl have forc  .  
Together, we could overturn the king,  
And each of us thrive in the thing we like.

HAFTHOR.

You would betray the king who is your friend,  
Who puts his trust in you, and holds you dear?

IVAR.

Trust is a sort of instrument wherewith  
Fair fortune strikes a balance in affairs  
'Twixt men and men. It is the trusting kind  
That wise men, understanding, shrewdly use  
For their advantage to in part adjust  
Life's inequalities. Will you join me?

For, let me tell you in your ear, that scene  
You had with Harold lately has complete  
Disarmed you of his love. He holds you now  
A thing for laughter and contempt. Be mine,  
And you may make your foolish boast come true.

## HAFTHOR.

When that fell genius, Loki, framed himself  
Into the fashion of the graceful snake  
To tempt with scaly beauty Baldur's wife,  
The outraged gods in anger set a seal  
Unrazable within the serpent's eye, —  
A cold and green and shifting light, that tells  
Of restless treachery and ill desire ;  
And whatsoever thing partakes of guile,  
Or man or beast, in its confessing eye  
It bears this baleful, hateful, furtive gleam !  
I long have known you for a thing to shun,  
But still I thought your sting reserved for foes ;  
I now perceive you of that subtle breed  
We not more fear than loathe. I mark the snake.

IVAR (*angrily*).

If so, beware its fangs. I know your hopes,  
And to the rearward of your pious words  
Detect the shadows of a crafty will.  
Think you your acts these five days were un-  
watched?  
Dull mole ! Impatient for its precious freight,  
Your ship lies rocking in the upland bay.  
Who knows your acts may guess your purpose.

HAFTHOR.

Spy!

And by your guess that purpose is?

IVAR.

What else

But that you mean to play the thief, and 'scape  
With her who is the jewel of the realm!

HAFTHOR (*coming nearer*).

And what will loyal, faithful Ivar do?

IVAR.

You well describe me, for, in truth, I am  
Entirely loyal to my kinsman king,  
And did but seek, pretending else, to prove  
Your metal's quality. I'll warn the king!

HAFTHOR (*clutching IVAR by the throat and forcing  
him to his knees*).

Then by the wakeful ravens of sad fate,  
The gaping mouth and starting eyes of death  
Shall speak that warning to him.

[FENJA, EYSA, and THORD enter pleasantly.]

IVAR.

Help! Undo!

HAFTHOR.

I will undo you without help.



FENJA.

Hafthor!

In self-compassion do not this rash thing!

[*To THORD.*] If you have liking for me, stay his hand!

THORD (*to HAFTHOR*).

What would you do? Nay, let him go! Leave off!

What madman's notion pushed you on to this?

[*After exertion THORD draws HAFTHOR away.*

*IVAR rises with signs of distress and rage.*

HAFTHOR (*to THORD*).

I'm glad to fulness that you came in time,

Though I may yet regret you came so soon.

But now you know me, Ivar, have a care!

My hate once kindled keeps a constant heat.

[*THORD turns to assist IVAR.*

FENJA.

Rash Hafthor! Have you not by this outburst

Of too long ripe disliking lamed our hope?

HAFTHOR.

Whatever chance misfalls, the blame not mine;

My only error was some lack of time

To finish out my wrathful purpose here.

THORD (*to IVAR*).

Are you a little winded, my good lord?

EYSA.

It seems your face has lost its wonted shade.

IVAR (*retiring*).

Fret not your hearts. The year has many days,  
And patient men find cure for all their hurts.  
There is a medicine to assuage each pain.

[*Exit* IVAR.]

EYSA.

There's pleasure seeing him in such a plight.

THORD.

I do not like his mood.

FENJA.

What was the cause?

THORD.

Ay; how fell you hotbrained two a-quarrel?

EYSA.

I warrant you 't was done in simple love.

FENJA.

Be serious, light heart. The case is grave.

EYSA.

Nay; can it be?

HAFTHOR.

So grave that you who are  
Confederate must know our care-built plans  
Are fallen out of use.

THORD.

By what mischance?

HAFTHOR.

The jealous prying of that swarthy knave  
You have let live to vex me.

THORD.

How? He knows?

HAFTHOR.

Part knows, and guesses part.

THORD.

I'll after him,  
And plague him to draw sword. An honest fight  
Will serve as well as choking!

HAFTHOR (*stopping him*).

Stay; not so.

In equal combat you're as like to trip  
As to bequeath his soul to silence.  
Besides, now that my sober thought has 'scaped  
The rioting of passion, I perceive

Our wiser course should be, concealment gone,  
To lay no trust in Harold's better mood,  
But act as though assured of his deny.

THORD.

If I may guess your meaning —

HAFTHOR.

I'll be plain.

The rumor flies of what the king intends ;  
And even now these emissary Swedes  
Are locked with him in counsel on his schemes,  
Which are, as Eyvind says, and I believe,  
No other than to reinforce his arms  
By mustering allies with Fenja's hand.  
If this be true, and circumstance gives proof,  
We need not wait to know what he will say  
In answer to my well preferred demand.

FENJA.

Unless my wish mistakes your backward thought,  
You would propose that our determined flight  
Be now, nor risk the king's uncertain fit?

HAFTHOR.

I did but hesitate to say as much,  
Fearing to see your eyes unfavoring cloud.  
Your question is the sanction of my will ;  
And if your near effects are so disposed  
That you may act upon the sudden call,

We'll take to horse, and in this one hour's time  
Be safe within my goodly ship, which waits  
To spread its eager wings for flight.

EYSA.

What sport

To give them so the slip! I would, sweet wench,  
I might along with you.

FENJA (*to HAFTHOR*).

I ask but time

To snatch a jewel that my mother wore,  
And all my future will I yield to you.

[*Exit FENJA, left.*]

THORD (*to EYSA*).

If you are willing to take chance with her,  
I will be servant to your wish. Shall we  
Join in our fortunes with their lot?

EYSA (*assenting*).

Make haste

To furnish me with horse. I'm in the vein  
For spirited adventure.

[*Exit THORD, excitedly.*]

HAFTHOR.

This is brave,

And drives my pulse into an extra throb  
Of grateful exultation. If no chance  
Misfall across our path, we four are tuned  
For happiness.

EYSA.

Is it not strange, think you,  
What pleasure 'tis to do what we should not?  
My will to odd caprice is like a leaf  
Puffed by the vagrant breeze.

THORD (*re-entering hurriedly*).

Quick, quick, to horse !

The king, riding a race of riot, comes  
With Swedes in mad career across the plain.

HAFTHOR (*going to door and looking out*).

It were not wise to tempt our fortune now.  
We could not gain the ship, and cast her bonds  
Before these wild pursuers ran us down.  
One hope remains, — that Ivar may not speak  
Before the shadows of to-night descend  
As our convoy to safety.

[EYSA goes to THORD as FENJA re-enters.]

FENJA (*to HAFTHOR*).

All 's prepared.

Come, let us lose no moment to begone !

HAFTHOR.

Our purpose is cut off ! I fear, fond heart,  
I may not have you peacefully. I fear  
The torrent blood of ruthless war must flow  
To sweep away the barriers that let.

FENJA.

Is there no other way for love to thrive?  
My spirit sickens at the thought of war.  
What hap has changed our plan?

HAFTHOR.

Look for yourself.

TIFORD.

I heard you speak of war as your recourse.  
You will not stir the people to rebel  
Against their rightful sovereign?

HAFTHOR.

Not I!

My soul knows nothing loathlier in man  
Than will to foster treason in the world.

THORD.

Then are you helpless, having no help else.

HAFTHOR.

My mind is not without some better hope, —  
For there are arms and hearts I may command,  
In my consanguine Dane-land. If we fail, —  
That is, if Harold answer me at odds,  
And Ivar act upon his cue, — I must,  
Though but the thought of parting chills me  
through,  
Go hence alone, and in the nearest time  
Return with such sure means to gain respect  
As even Harold must perforce regard.

THORD.

Is it so certain you may tempt the Danes  
To northern battle, when their greed lies south?

HAFTHOR.

They look with envy on the peopled earth  
Not more to ravage than to conquer it,  
And go with gladness where there waits a foe.  
Besides, — for that my father was well versed  
In Runes no less than in the use of arms, —  
The Danish Harold was my mate in youth;  
And when, before he came to throne and sway,  
With heavy heart I said farewell to him, —  
What we have since become were we two then, —  
He swore, while tears stood vouchers in his eyes,  
No time should ever teach him slight my wish.  
Be sure I'll find an army in Denmark.

THORD.

In that event, though 't is not well to say  
By one who must lift sword to hurt your cause,  
I wish you all success when time is ripe.

FENJA (*coming to* HAFTHOR).

What will you do if worst befall us now?

HAFTHOR.

That which I told you yester night.

FENJA.

Alone?



HAFTHOR.

It must be so — Nay, I'll return in time  
To intercept the Swedes and save my bride.

[THORD joins EYSA.

FENJA.

I did not think of peril when I thought  
That I should ride the wintry deep with you ;  
But dangers double if you go alone.  
It is a fearful time of year at sea ;  
Should Ægir rage I tremble what —

HAFTHOR.

Fear not !

My good ship rides the gale and leaps for joy  
To meet the fury of the storm. Wild winds  
And monstrous waves, fierce bolts of angry flame,  
That make the horrors of a night at sea,  
Are to my ship what music is to you, —  
The soul and spirit of delicious hours.

FENJA.

But you !

HAFTHOR.

Upon the bosom of the deep,  
In calm or tempest, ship and man are one.

FENJA.

I cannot help but fear to have you go.

THORD.

They are dismounting, — or, 't were better said,  
They fling themselves from horse, and, by my life,  
The crafty Ivar's there to greet the king.

HAFTHOR.

Fenja,

When first I looked upon your fair, pale face,  
Now ten years gone, you were a dainty slip  
That swayed uncertainwise between the spells  
Of girlish wafture and of woman's calm,  
Yet caught into yourself the charm of each.  
You did some kindness for me then that won  
My liking, — though I never thought of love  
Till that wild winter from the tumbled snows  
I chanced to rescue you, and felt your arms  
Wind trustingly about my neck! 'T was then  
Your father bade me name reward, and I,  
With doubt mixed up in hope, asked for your hand.  
He shot one searching look into your face,  
Then smiled, and bade me wait. Before he died  
He learned to have some joy in our twined loves,  
And free affirmed our troth; therefore, I hold  
That you are mine against the world, though all  
Were brothers wantonly denying me. Think you  
With me?

FENJA.

My heart keeps current by your will!  
And, if it seem unnatural, 't is true,  
My brother weighs but light against your love.

HAFTHIOR (*taking serpentine bracelet from his arm*).

My father, dying, left me three great gifts, —  
 My ship, a sword invincible, and this —  
 And this more precious than the rest, for that  
 It holds the wearer faithful to a vow.  
 Put forth your arm. Keep this secure, and love  
 For me will last.

[*Clasps bracelet about FENJA's arm.*]

FENJA.

I'll guard it close,  
 As though it held my holy audit. But —  
 For, oh, there are forebodings in my soul —  
 Leave me not abandoned; and be you not  
 O'er quick to harbor doubts for truth, nor be  
 Unfaithful where you ask for faith.

HAFTHIOR.

Doubt not.

My life shall be as constant unto you  
 As Urd and Skuld to sacred Ygdrazil.

EYVIND (*entering hastily, preceded by a slave*).

Strike the shield! Beat up the slaves! Make  
 bustle!

Let places swarm with serviceable life!  
 I am betop myself to find such sloth.

[*Exit. Slave takes down shield, and exit, beating.*]

THORD (*coming to HAFTHOR*).

Have you considered what were best?

HAFTHOR.

I have.

My mind is fixed.

THORD.

This hour may part us, then?

HAFTHOR.

If Harold do deny me, — and he will, —

No course is left me but to quit his court.

[*To FENJA.*] The thought of leaving you behind  
is like

A jagged barb that turns within my heart ;

And I might not endure it, but a pride

As masterful as passion fills my mind,

And numbs the dearer pains. [*To THORD.*] A  
needful word ;

Here are directions how I may be reached.

The point is fourteen days from here. If aught

To bear upon my fortune haps, haste you

To make me known of it. I, in my turn,

If need arise, will loose with timely charge

The swift-winged hawk of Fenja's that I have.

FENJA.

Good ! 'T would never rest but it should find me.

THORD.

I will regard your wish in all respects.

[THORD *moves aside, attracted by laughter without.*

HAFTHOR.

My eyes must speak my soul's good-by to you.

FENJA.

E'en though it were my death, I'd fold my arms  
About your cherished neck, and court your lips.

[IVAR *enters, bows to THORD, and then advances.*

HAFTHOR (to FENJA).

As full of courage as of tenderness.

IVAR.

As full of folly as of waywardness !  
Nay, fall not so apart ; the king is here.  
Cheat not his eyes of so approved a sight.

[FENJA *retires behind the king's chair at table,*  
*where she is joined by EYSA.*

HAFTHOR (to IVAR).

Tempt me no farther to your harm. Be warned !  
I have a prophecy within my breast  
That fate has chosen me to raze one blot  
From Nature's sullied page of life.

IVAR.

Next time  
You level at my throat — a dog's death yours !

[HAFTHOR *withdraws one side. With laughter and murmurs of talk, enter HAROLD, OLIF, the Swedes and others. EYVIND re-enters. Slave restores shield to place.*

HAROLD (*entering*).

And tell old Swend, Sir Olif, how I race.  
I'm not alone a king by choice and birth,  
But by superior fitness, too !

OLIF.

Most true !

OTHERS.

Ay, ay. A most fit king.

HAROLD.

And one who knows to punish and reward.  
Hail, Sister ; and you, merry mistress, hail !  
Twin flowers to grace my state !

FENJA.

We welcome you.

HAROLD (*to OLIF*).

Take place upon my right ; Ivar, at left.  
The rest of you range where you will, familiar.

Hey, Uncle ! By my head ! I overlooked.  
Take counter seat to mine. Why came you not  
To council ?

EYVIND.

For I did the wiser thing  
To stay in judgment with the cooks.

HAROLD.

Well thought ;  
And yet I missed your cunning. [*To FENJA.*] Sweet  
plaything,  
This day have you weighed equal to the best  
Five thousand warriors that Sweden boasts.  
Are you not proud ?

HAFTHOR (*aside*).

He then has made the compact. Trust, farewell !

OLIF (*taking cup from lips*).

Ay, good King Harold, proud !  
There is no lesser word. Look how she glows !

IVAR.

And now her head rears up as though 't were  
crowned.

[*Laughter.*]

HAFTHOR (*aside*).

Oh, gods ! That they should make her blush  
their jest !

EYVIND.

There is upon her brow a crown, Sir Jarl,  
More radiant than gold. 'T is virtue's gift.

HAROLD.

None may dispute you, Uncle.

EYVIND.

May? None dare.

HAROLD.

Come, Fenja, Eysa, women all, bear cups.  
Slaves never should corrupt good wine at feast.

IVAR.

Ay. Fenja only shall pour drink for me,

OTHERS.

“And me.” “Ay, Fenja 't is.” “None else.”  
“Come, girl.”

FENJA.

And shall I then be servant unto all?

THORD.

I will omit you. Eysa's cup is mine.

OLIF (*rising hotly*).

And do you play this shame to flout my king,  
That you make minion of his future queen?  
By all the whizzing lightnings —



HAROLD.

You mistake.

This is no shame, but custom's courtesy.  
The girl is honored, e'en to envy's pitch,  
Who bears her horn the table round at call.

OLIF.

Is 't true?

EYVIND.

Most true.

OLIF (*to FENJA*).

Then pour to me.

HAROLD.

Good cheer!

EYVIND.

What was it some one said of "future queen"?

OLIF.

The word was mine. What follows?

EYVIND (*deprecatingly*).

Tell us you.

IVAR (*to HAROLD*).

What was agreed?

OLIF (*rising*).

Why, then —

HAROLD (*reproving OLIF, and rising*).

Nay, by your leave.

HAFTHOR (*aside*).

Now shall we hear dishonor boast itself.

False dicer, juggling king !

HAROLD.

Norway, good friends,  
Has been so long unstirred by healthful war  
That, like the o'erfed body unemployed,  
She's sick through very sloth. The chase, the  
dance,  
Some brawls among ourselves, or now, perchance,  
A wrestle with the storms at sea, are all  
The pastimes that have kept us fit for life ;  
While nations all around, to south and east,  
Have swept the earth with conquest and grown  
great.

But most of these the Danes, a savage horde,  
Have scourged the fruitful islands of the south,  
Subduing monster tribes, and, as I'm told,  
Have even dared to fix a hostile hope  
Upon that wonderous people housed in Rome.

[*Murmurs about table as HAROLD stops to drink.*

FENJA, *who has now approached HAFTHOR,*  
*offers horn to him, which he takes, pretending to*  
*drink.*

FENJA.

I well-nigh faint through fear for you, brave heart.

HAFTHOR.

At any danger threatens me, I smile,  
Armed with your love. Pass on. You are ob-  
served.

FENJA (*pleading*).

Keep peace, and let us trust a fitter time.

HAFTHOR.

I've seen the king's eye on me. Now 's the time.

FENJA.

Farewell.

[*Moves away.*]

IVAR (*to HAROLD*).

We have a free Dane listening here.

HAROLD (*smiling*).

Free? Yes. And so the clipped-wing hawk is free.  
I said, good friends, that we are sick for war.  
We want more booty and we want more lands,  
But chief of all we wish to crush the pride  
Of these o'ermastering brute Danes, before  
They turn their evil will on us. So 't is  
That, swelling with a loyal love for ye,  
I have resolved, with great King Swend's avail,  
To swoop upon them in the snow-melt time  
And harry them. In pledge to that brave end,  
Through noble Olif here, I have espoused

My sister Fenja unto Sweden's lord,  
Whereby we make alliance and gain arms.  
The Tynwald has approved. Does any here  
Hold otherwise?

IVAR.

Who dare oppose your will  
But in contempt of death?

EYVIND (*rising*).

Nay, not so bad,  
For one may question with an honest doubt.  
I think we cannot overcome the Danes;  
But if we need must venture, let it be  
Before the spring, when they are up for war.

HAROLD.

We cannot chance till spring, for only then  
Will Swend, whom age has stricken heavily,  
Move to his mating. Fenja, you have heard.  
A monarch comes to husband you in spring,  
And will bestow an army for you. Speak;  
Say how it pleases you.

FENJA.

What pleases me  
Might to your hearing bring no pleasant sound,  
Were I to speak it. Pray you leave me dumb,  
Since I must act according to your will,  
Whether for sad or happy doing.

HAROLD.

What !

Do you not rejoice ?

OLIF.

Is she not then proud ?

EYVIND.

You will not find her lacking pride.

HAFTHOR (*aside*).

Patience,

Thou rebel blood upsurging 'gainst my will !

HAROLD.

Do you not rejoice ?

FENJA.

Good my brother, think ;

You must remember there are precious things

That tenderly take root within the heart,

And, growing with the years, become a part

Among its vital fibres. I obey

Whatever you command my body do ;

The gods have sole dominion o'er the rest.

HAROLD.

The gods make pastime with a love-sick heart.

Time is the medicine for ills like that.

OLIF (*confused*).

I do not understand — but she obeys.

IVAR.

Such fine obedience makes pretty thought ;  
And yet — I 've known simplicity conceal  
A deal of subtle cunning.

HAFTHOR (*starting*).

Will he prate ?

Then arm me, resolution, to my course !

HAROLD.

What is the riddle here ?

IVAR.

No riddle, sir —

FENJA (*to EYSA*).

We are betrayed.

EYSA.

There 's nothing yet to fear.

IVAR (*continuing*).

But I have seen a ship prepared to sail,  
And know two guilty lovers —

HAFTHOR (*hotly*).

Tell your lord

How treason lurks behind a fair aspect,

And smiling murder strokes his friendly hand.  
Omit no part that gives your story life  
Through modest wish to hide your own desert !

IVAR (*rising*).

Speak you to me ?

HAFTHOR.

I speak to none but you.  
Look to him, Harold ; have a care, or you  
Who practise treachery may feel its sting.  
[IVAR *draws sword and starts forward, but is*  
*checked by HAROLD, laughing. Half the table*  
*rises.*

HAFTHOR.

Nay, let him come. We have embraced before.

[THORD *comes down to* HAFTHOR.

HAROLD (*to* IVAR).

Do you not see he has gone mad through spite ?  
We must not, swording, spoil so rare a jest.  
Come, sit you down.

IVAR.

I tell you he 's a knave.

[FENJA *goes to* EYVIND, *and whispers to him.*

HAROLD.

Then he shall be our sport.

[IVAR *sits.* HAROLD *turns to* OLIF, *whispering.*

THORD (*to HAFTHOR*).

You peril life  
By this o'erbold display. Look where, all pale  
In trembling terror, Fenja stands and pleads !

HAFTHOR.

My soul's enraged ; my wits are all at war.  
I know two passions only, — love for her  
And wild desire to full avenge my wrongs.

THORD.

Now be restrained ; you are unequal here.  
This Ivar is a jarl, and you —

HAFTHOR.

A man,  
Full armed to play the part of man,  
Though death were made the judgment on my act !  
I tell thee, Harold, though this speech my last —  
[FENJA *plucks* HAFTHOR *by the sleeve*.

EYVIND (*quickly interrupting*).

Good friends,  
Let's have no more of these untimely brawls.  
When we have done our feeding and withdrawn,  
There's space enough to counter-carve ourselves.

OLIF.

Ay, ay. This monstrous mirthful Harold here  
Has told me how yon golden youth can sing,



And give the voice of battle to his harp.  
I fain would hear him. Bid him sing.

VOICES.

A song !

HAROLD.

Sir Harper, use your voice.

FENJA.

Where is your harp ?

I will go fetch it that your touch may know  
My fingers have caressed the strings.

HAFTHOR.

Dear one,  
You 'll play upon my heart-strings easier.  
[*Then turning to THORD intently.*  
Think you there is a man with bow or spear  
Would raise his arm to injure me ?

THORD.

Not one !

FENJA.

You are the idol of the people all.

OLIF.

The song ; why waits the song ?

HAROLD (*commandingly*).

Sing, Hafthor, sing.

HAFTHOR (*to THORD and FENJA*).

If you are right, my course lies straight ahead.

[HAFTHOR, *taking FENJA by the hand, turns slowly, confronting the king.*

I have no song to sing, but right to claim ;  
And since you bid me use my voice, give ear !  
By royal pledge and her consent, this maid  
Is wedded mistress to my heart, — is mine, —  
And none may take her from me but the gods.  
I see a fury lurks behind your smile,  
And know the folly of my further speech  
In any plea for justice. Your set word  
Has by yourself been broken — you, a king —

HAROLD.

That one is only fit to be a king  
Who does not fear to break his plighted word.  
A promise is the coin of policy,  
To be redeemed or not, as wisdom rules.

HAFTHOR.

That king is fit for death who would abuse  
His word, though plighted to the meanest slave.

IVAR.

A traitor's speech !

THORD (to HAFTHOR).

In Baldur's name, have done !

IVAR.

Let him die for this !

OLIF.

Ay ! Let him die !

[FENJA *interposes to shield* HAFTHOR.

HAROLD (*with authority*).

Stop !

I will not have it so ! Fenja, remove !

[EYSA *takes* FENJA *one side*.

[*To* HAFTHOR.] For that you are a minstrel, we  
forbear

The harsher judgment to pronounce on you,

And for the better reason, we were friends !

But longer in our realm you may not stay.

This night, and yet to-morrow morn, be free ;

From then, beware. Begone !

HAFTHOR (*throwing off robe, and appearing armed*).

The skald is dead,

And from his robes the viking leaps to life !

The gleaming sword my father's grandsire got

From Denmark's king, — a royal gift, whose steel

The gods themselves did forge, — behold, I grasp.

Though lowly I, yet noble this, divine ;

And, waved above the legions of my land,  
This blade shall raise up armies to my need,  
To follow where I list and do my will.  
I will be gone ; but by great Tyr ! I swear,  
Back to false Norway and her falser king  
With clanging brass and glittering steel I'll come  
To take the bride her father pledged to me.  
Farewell, fond Fenja.

FENJA (*crying to him*).

Hafthor, fare you well.

HAFTHOR.

Be not dismayed by chance. I will return.

HAROLD (*in rage*).

Lay hold on him !

[*Several warriors move reluctantly forward, but are checked by a gesture from HAFTHOR.*]

HAFTHOR.

Who do are slaves to death.

No mortal front may stay this brand. Look ye !

[*Smites the hanging shield in twain.*]

HAROLD.

Slaves, cravens, do ye shrink ?

[*HAROLD springs forward with drawn sword, and confronts HAFTHOR.*]

HAFTHOR.

Fate frowns ! Make way !

My soul is roused for battle, and is glad !

*[Strikes sword from HAROLD'S hand, and beating  
right and left, exit quickly.]*

## Act Third.

SCENE. — *Sacred grove. Up centre, surmounting rude stone steps, a statue of Baldur with HAFTHOR'S bracelet on arm. At the left a statue of Freya. Between them on a stone altar burns a fire. Scene opens with maidens, attired in white, and youths engaged in a quaint dance of ceremonious rejoicing before the altar. People pass from left to right, bowing and handing flowers to dancers, who drop them on and about the altar.*

[*Enter THORD and EYSA, following example of others, and then coming front.*

THORD.

Upon what ground do you refuse?

EYSA.

What ground?

An odd request! I do not wish to wed.

THORD.

There should be limit to your wayward wiles.

EYSA.

There shall be, when your folly has run out.

THORD.

I'm not so scant of wisdom but I know  
Your tongue proves untrue herald of your thought.

EYSA.

Here speaks a gallant lover, in good truth!  
To tell me flatly that I lie! If else  
I had no wholesome reason not to wed,  
There's argument in that.

THORD.

Sweet, be content;  
No better time will come than is at hand,  
With none to hinder us, unless the king,  
And he lends favor. How should we thrive more  
In happiness than wed when Fenja does?

EYSA.

There lies the fault. Were she content to wive,  
You might persuade me follow her glad lead.  
But yonder, all a-weep at heart, she kneels  
Within the templed grove, and prays the gods  
To snatch her from a rightly hated lord  
Who might have wed her granddame.

THORD.

She cares not,  
Now that Hafthor is dead, who may possess her.

EYSA.

How poorly you do know the soul of grief !  
She holds herself more holy than before,  
And lists a voice speak in her widowed heart  
The only comfort that her mind will take.  
Whatever shuts her from that sad delight  
Is hateful to her.

[*A black horse, caparisoned, is led past by slaves,  
from left to right, the dancers following. THORD  
and EYSA look after them.*]

THORD.

I, too, pity her.

It was a grief to me when evil chance  
Brought fame of Hafthor drowned. I loved him  
too.

We were as bow and arrow, each to each,  
One careless without other. But the time  
Has sped along three months since at our feet,  
With ill report, his spent hawk fluttered down.  
There is a stop to sorrow, howe'er deep ;  
It is no virtue to be always grave.  
A memory of friends lives in our joy  
Not less than in our sadness.

EYSA.

Urge no more.

I will not put my friend to mockery,  
And flaunt my happiness 'fore her despair.



Had Hafthor come again, as he declared,  
And saved her to himself, I'll not deny  
Your pleading might have moved me ; now my will  
Is in assignment to my friend. Let's go.

THORD.

My henceforth mistress shall be that grim hag  
Whose bed is made of sharp corroding cares,  
And whose gaunt table is by famine spread !

EYSA.

So ! And would you starve in solitude when soon  
You may have chance to perish in brave war ?

THORD.

You gird at me beyond fair putting on.  
I will no more be puppet to your jest.

EYSA.

Then I'll amend, and by fair putting on,  
Gird thus — [*Placing her arms over his shoulders.*]  
Now am I free to have my way ?

THORD.

So bound, I would with unresisting step  
Be led to mortal torments.

EYSA.

So I think  
You will be if you cling to me.

THORD.

Lead on !

If you are Hella changed into this form,  
My soul is willing to be damned.

EYSA.

Come, haste !

The king and that detested Ivar near.  
I have of late a terror of that man.

THORD.

He 's but a wolf that barks at distance.  
A brand puts him to flight. I will not budge.

EYSA.

Farewell !

THORD.

Unless it be to go with you.

[THORD and EYSA exeunt. Enter HAROLD and  
IVAR.

HAROLD.

You make an idle jest.

IVAR.

I speak the truth.

Your mad ambition leads you on to war  
That must employ all numbers you can raise.

Cheat me of my desire, deny my will,  
Against the compact fashioned by yourself,  
And from your standard I and mine revolt.

HAROLD.

Rebellious cousin, know you not that I,  
By crooking of my finger thus, may sign  
Your mortal quittance of this world?

IVAR.

And I

Need but to eagle plume my helm to have  
An hundred arrows singing toward your heart.  
Call me rebellious, traitor, what you will ;  
Terms are but idle things, and change with states.  
Successful treason gets another name ;  
But I have not the wish to aid your foes.

HAROLD.

And yet you say you head a hostile crowd.

IVAR.

Five thousand human hunters serve my nod, —  
The equal number of your Swedish horde,  
And worth in battle twice their count. These men  
Whom you have seen in frenzy of the fight  
Inflame mad rage by drinking blood they shed,  
Will aid or balk you as I lead or check.  
Win me, and they are yours ; lose me, — lose them.

HAROLD.

Then for these years that I have pricked my heart  
In thoughts of love for you, you were my foe !

IVAR.

Indeed, not so. Your friend I was and am ;  
But friendship is a thing commutable,  
And lives by passing to and fro 'tween friends  
Who stand on equal dignity. All else  
Is servile, selfish, base.

HAROLD.

What would you have ?

IVAR.

I have made known my wish.

HAROLD.

Make 't known again.

IVAR.

I would possess your sister.

HAROLD.

By what means ?

IVAR.

Must I forever prattle of the means  
To one, it has been whispered, found a way  
To sate his longing for a throne ?

HAROLD.

Mark you :

Though it has been my mood these sometime years  
To have you play the snarling cur at heels,  
Beware you do not let me feel your teeth.  
Step but beyond your license, and, by Thor !  
I'll feed your carcass to the wolves. Speak, now.

IVAR.

Well, then, — and I am sorry for my speech, —  
I know your nature proudly irks to share  
The fruits of conquest with an alien king.  
You see in Swend a means ; you like not him,  
And would be grateful for his taking off.

HAROLD.

However much a knave, you're not a fool.

IVAR.

I ever hope to hold your good esteem.

HAROLD.

And yet I cannot put a stop to Swend  
Without the risk to lose his savages.

IVAR.

I have had thought of that among the rest.

HAROLD.

Clear-sighted villain ! What then is your plan ?

IVAR.

When Fenja has been wived to Swend, the law  
Of ancient custom binds these Swedish dogs  
In loyal deference to her. As queen  
They will regard her, and bethink them bound  
To lend their lives in service to her will.  
The marriage shall go on ; but when 't is done,  
I have arranged the royal pair attend  
Where some five hundred bowmen of my own  
Engage with others in a mimic war  
To celebrate this royal covenant.

HAROLD.

I think I smell your crafty purpose out.  
Some ill-directed arrow shall find rest  
In old unhappy Swend's mistaken heart?

IVAR.

There have been such mishaps ere now.

HAROLD.

Alas !

The gracious Baldur died that way. Who knows  
What wayward fate may fashion in an hour !  
From shrine to tomb there runs a travelled road.  
What careless archer speeds the shaft?

IVAR.

A man

Who shot against the sun one time, and pierced  
The very centre of a flying dove.

HAROLD.

Yourself ! Well chosen. In affairs like this  
'T is dangerous to bungle. You have eyes  
The wary hawk might covet, and a nerve  
As hardy as well-seasoned oak. 'T is done.  
Old Swend is dead ; and to your hand I owe  
The undivided glory that I see  
Across the wooing waves where Denmark shines !

IVAR.

And my reward ?

HAROLD.

I had forgot. Rejoice ;  
She shall be yours. [*Aside.*] Weak-witted fool !  
The trick

You teach me how to clip a friend, will serve,  
Or I mistake, to slake a foe. Let's see.  
To be where I can watch, and when Swend falls  
Let fly an arrow to drink Ivar's soul !  
'T were shrewd, and easy too. I'll do 't. — Good  
friend,

I have bethought me, and I like your scheme.  
You are my father's sister's son, and so  
Congenial to the throne whose dignity  
A meaner quality would mar. Your hand !  
To gain a brother in a cousin's loss  
Is worth contriving.

IVAR.

Mine's the greater gain.

HAROLD.

Not so ; if our good plans run not amiss  
I look to find the larger profit mine.

[*A remote hollo.*

And so you think when all is done, these Swedes  
Will lend obedience to Fenja?

IVAR.

The death will be a fault of chance, which we,  
With swelling voices and o'erflowing eyes,  
Will more lament than they. Still, I have thought  
It would advantage us to kill some knave  
As he had done the monstrous deed. And then —

[*Hollo nearer.*

HAROLD.

I like your cunning. You would say?

IVAR.

And then

We might appease their grief by such display  
In funeral of Swend as would to us  
Bind close their wonder and regard.

HAROLD.

Well thought.

I hold you in unshared respect. Indeed,  
You have the qualities would make a king  
Excelling me, were I to pass away.

[*“HAROLD!” is called off.*



[*Turning.*] What now?

Who runs a bellow in such headlong haste?

[*Enter a runner.*

RUNNER (*kneeling*).

Most mighty Harold!

HAROLD.

Nay; speak when you can.

You've lost more breath in clamor than in speed.

[*Enter EYVIND, left.*

Fie, Uncle; you are laggard of sweet time.

That pace will never see my sister wed.

EYVIND.

Stood but her marriage on my pace, my lord,

My feet should root themselves where now I stop.

IVAR.

I would the gods could make a tree of you.

EYVIND.

So would I, were you the fruit hung on me.

HAROLD (*aside*).

There is a notion. Might not men be hung?

RUNNER.

I do implore you, hear me, mighty king.

HAROLD.

Well, spill your tattle. What is your report?

RUNNER.

A strange, dread rumor comes with one who says  
The blue sea, bathing in the morning sun,  
Is white and dark with many sailing ships  
Full-headed for us.

EYVIND (*starting aside*).

Hafthor! Surely 't is!  
For I, in faith, do not believe him dead.  
If 't is he, 't were well they not yet know.

HAROLD (*to Ivar*).

This news alarms me.

EYVIND.

I have seen the spell.  
This fellow but reports a fantasy;  
It is a trick of nature or the gods.  
Sometimes I have looked upon the glassy stretch,  
And seen a fearful army camped, as though  
The stayless waters were a plain. 'T is naught.

IVAR.

Be not deceived. This is no trick of sight.  
Some rash adventure threatens us.

HAROLD.

No doubt!

[*To runner.*] Go you to Thord, — speak not to  
any else, —

And bid him marshal forth his men in arms  
And march them to the wood anigh the coast.  
But, mark you, tell him not the cause.

[*Exit runner.*

Uncle,

Lead on, I'll follow.

EYVIND.

Whither shall I lead?

HAROLD.

Where were you bound?

EYVIND.

I think it was to see my niece befouled.

HAROLD.

You trade upon your beard and kin too far;  
My ears have heard too many gibes from you.  
Be warned, good uncle, treason is a thing  
Propinquity does not excuse, nor age!

EYVIND.

If my true words are treason, strike! To die  
For hating and denouncing wrong is but  
To win the favor of the gods.

IVAR.

Stop not,  
My lord, to wrangle with a dotard now.  
There's matter of more moment to be done.

HAROLD.

It was for that I sought to send him on.  
He plays the braggart with me, knowing well  
I would not harm him out of love.

EYVIND.

My nephew, as it seems to me, is less  
Security than your indifference.  
And far less profitable than your hate.

HAROLD.

I will not quarrel with you further. Go!  
[Exit EYVIND.]

IVAR.

Will he not play the messenger to Swend  
And make alarm of rumor?

HAROLD.

Wrong him not.  
He might indeed be glad to see me checked,  
And hold his tongue when speaking were my help :  
But he will not be active to my hurt.  
Enough of him. Look to your plan. These ships,  
Whatever they portend, cannot disgorge

Their stomachs on us ere the afternoon.  
We've time enough to do what we propose,  
And still prepare for battle, if the gods  
Have blown a foe against us. Would it were  
A fleet of Danish dogs! 'T would save us much.

IVAR.

What other can it be?

HAROLD.

I do not know;  
And yet I cannot hope such fortune mine  
To meet detested Denmark sword to sword,  
Nor be at pains to seek him.

IVAR.

He it is,  
Beyond debate.

HAROLD.

Then will we glut the gods  
With slaughter, — for these Danes shall land  
    unchid;  
And when between my armies and the sea  
Their savage numbers crowd, let mercy die,  
And rival furies strive for them, — the sea  
An hungered, and the sword athirst. Farewell.  
And when again we meet, let Swend be dead,  
And Denmark underfoot.

IVAR.

My share shall thrive.

HAROLD.

And mine. But first to see these lovers wed,  
Since I, as priest, must seal the solemn bond.

[HAROLD and IVAR exeunt severally. Persons at intervals cross from left to right, followed by a small band of warriors going to wedding. Enter HAFTHOR, attended by ERIC, his armor-bearer.]

HAFTHOR.

There's some strange stir afoot. It cannot be  
They have espied our ships, for all bespeaks  
Some glad occasion, not alarm of war.

ERIC.

The earth is quick with men in panoply,  
And yet it seems for sport. What god's day this?

HAFTHOR.

None Norway cares to keep. 'Tis more than that.

ERIC.

I now perceive the wisdom of your plan  
To land at night, and put our ships about  
To ride full sail at anchor.

HAFTHOR.

Strategy

Is oftentimes better than a host. As 'tis,  
These dull Norwegians will advance to shore

To trip our landing, whereupon will we  
From out our woody hiding circle down,  
And prod them at advantage.

ERIC.

And for mirth, —  
For I detect some humor in the trick.

HAFTHOR.

Mirth ! My brother soldier, — for you are still  
More friend than underling, — learn now,  
I never thought of war with more regret,  
With deeper sorrow in regret. For note :  
Of all the swarm that peoples Norway's top  
There are but two who slant from my regard,  
While all the rest have loved me and been loved.

ERIC.

But did you not beg our King Harold's aid  
To clip these Norsemen ? Are we not arrived  
At your request ? And are you not, besides,  
Bedecked as next lieutenant to the king ?  
A strange address to conquest is regret.

HAFTHOR.

The heart is camp for wide emotions, friend ;  
And opposites range close beside. I loved,  
And therefore ready hated ; but on hate  
Love lays subduing hand. I could forego  
All glories of the fight to feel the breath

Of one slight creature play upon my cheek ;  
To steal my fingers through her golden hair,  
And hear her heart make music with my own.  
I think, until our horde surged on the coast,  
There was no other purpose in my mind, —  
Slaughter was but contingent chance, — but now  
In all the dispositions of the Danes  
’T is plain to see, the chief concern is blood.

ERIC.

And should we have our trouble all for naught,  
Returning to our women snug at home  
With no more booty than a dawdling girl?

HAFTHOR.

Judge you the tortive way to yon bleak crag  
That thrusts its head defiant to the sun?—

ERIC.

It is a startling height.

HAFTHOR.

I climbed there once  
To fetch the ware-hawk’s young ; for what, think  
you?

ERIC.

I ’ll not believe, a girl.

HAFTHOR.

’T was so, indeed.  
But doubt not I will do my duty. No ;



I'm not more love-sick than a soldier should.  
Well, let's along. I did but tarry here  
In memory of other days, — for here,  
When evening was aglow with rosy light  
Slipped from the lingering sun, we've sat at ease  
Among the sacred plants, and imaged things  
The future should make real. Before the shrine  
Where even now the scattered flowers of peace  
Declare that service has been done to-day,  
We've knelt to mingle prayers, and raised our eyes  
To catch the hoped-for smile on Baldur's face.  
There is the god, and — Death and judgment!

What!

Upon his arm! Look you! Lend me your eyes.  
A twining bracelet of whipped gold! My own!  
My gift! My solemn troth to her! Her pledge!  
False treachery! Deceitful cheat! Lewd lie!  
Oh, turn the purple of my blood to gall,  
Fill me top full of venom'd hate, ye gods!  
And take your cause that I despoil ye thus!  
[*Snatches bracelet from the arm of Baldur, and in  
doing so flings down the image.*]

ERIC.

What horror have you done? Great Odin, roused,  
Will rive our souls with thunderbolts. Hence!  
Hence!

HAFTHOR.

I've done a direful thing, but will not fly;  
Besides, the gods are potent there as here.

Nor do I care what ill they heap on me ;  
I've lived the whole of life in this one hour,  
Been green in hope and withered in despair.  
But now some other than myself, new lived,  
There stalks, inviting on the grizzled shape  
I know twin brother to my soul, — Revenge !  
Hate and Revenge ; their lodging here !

ERIC.

The gods —

HAFTIÖR.

Do I not live? The gods are temporal ;  
Indeed, I've heard a story from the East  
Says they are cheats. And they have played with  
me,  
Where all my dearest, fondest fancies were,  
Turning to sport their steadfast servitor.  
Maybe for that I cooled my thoughts toward them  
With ardent longing for a thing of earth,  
The gods have sent this blight to chasten me.  
And yet I loved her holily, nor failed  
To raise to Asgard momentarily my thanks  
To all the gods conjunctive, that their will  
Had lent me such a jewel to be worn.  
Why then should they transform their precious gift  
Into a noisome plague to shrink my life,  
And twist my soul into a knotted spleen  
'Gainst all the one-time virtues which now seem  
The smiling treachery that damns belief?

Oh, Eric, I am set against myself,  
Now burning for revenge, now wishing death!

ERIC.

Before my fears my nimble thoughts took flight.  
(I fear no man; but anger of the gods  
Is something other.) In your rage, my fear,  
May it not chance we've done some creature wrong?

HAFTHOR.

That is to say?

ERIC.

Who paints your leman false?  
Who but yourself has found attaint in her?  
Might not this trinket have been wrest from her?

HAFTHOR.

There is a thought worth all my wealth, if true.  
Come! Let's to proof, good friend!  
[Starts forward, and confronts IVAR, entering hurriedly. Both draw swords.

Now, Ivar, now!

And by my lustihood! upon your truth  
Your life hangs fencible. Resolve me this, —  
What goes apace? To what rejoicing work  
Is Norway lent to floral-deck the earth?

IVAR.

Your own doubts answer you. I am in haste.

HAFTHOR.

You shall not stir.

IVAR.

I pray you let me hence.

Fair battle is a Nor'man's joy ; but now  
King Harold lies at adverse odds, because  
He thinks your Danes are snuggled in their ships,  
Whereas they swarm to landward of his host.  
Yonder he comes in trooping pageant now.  
Let me to warn him.

HAFTHOR.

Who is wed?

IVAR.

Fenja.

HAFTHOR.

Who drave this thing along?

IVAR.

Her own request.

HAFTHOR.

So ! Then she weds for liking?

IVAR.

Something such,  
Though liking more his crown than her new lord.

HAFTHOR.

A crown ! Then do you say that Swend has come  
While whipping gales have stayed me out of course ?

IVAR.

Whatever thing delayed you, 't was no harm.  
Her wanton heart, not vagrant wind, cheats you.

HAFTHOR.

Wretch ! that to torture me would slander her ;  
That hate-shot lie bites at my sword. Prepare !  
For in the air whatever haggard fiend  
Is dam of you, yearns to possess your soul.

*[Music is faintly heard off.]*

IVAR.

Rash fool ! Were you preponderate to my sword,  
An hundred blades avenging are at hand.

HAFTHOR.

These wind-taught trees that murmur so of peace  
Are native bulwarks to my tithe of Danes  
Who love their chief. Blanch for yourself, not me ;  
I've men to match with Harold's knaves ; I'm  
yours.

IVAR.

I tell you, Hafthor, if all life's rewards  
Were crammed into my hand a holden thing,  
I'd slack my grasp, and let the bauble slip  
To have your head my prize.

HAFTHOR.

Here's for it, then !

[*They fight. IVAR falls severely wounded.*]

IVAR.

Spare not ! My hurt is past all medicine.  
Strike, butcher, strike !

HAFTHOR.

That I will not. My sword  
Has never yet drunk helpless blood. [*To ERIC.*]

Here, friend,

Unloose him. [*Aside.*] He is touch of kin to her,  
Though no more like to her than hawk to dove.

Oh, that these counter pangs would burst my heart !

[*ERIC bends over IVAR. As music comes near, HAFTHOR withdraws a little aside, keeping to right, and stands regarding approaching procession. Enter girls in white, strewing flowers along the way, followed by harpers. These cross and exeunt, and HAFTHOR takes stage down centre, and stands with folded arms as FENJA comes in on a black horse, led by slaves, followed by HAROLD and SWEND, walking together. When nearly across the stage, FENJA hears HAROLD speak, turns and sees and recognizes HAFTHOR, and with a cry slips to the ground. She runs and falls at HAFTHOR's feet. Warriors fill the right stage.*]

HAROLD.

Is not that Hafthor? Can it be? How come?  
[*Advancing, is stopped by a voice.*

A VOICE.

Baldur has fallen! Look where Baldur lies!  
Woe come to Norway with this god o'erthrown!  
[*The people turn and see the prostrate image, and  
sink down in terror or flee. HAROLD and others  
gather round the altar to raise the image.*

VOICES.

Woe! Woe to Norway!

HAROLD.

Peace! Norway lives in Norway's king secure!

FENJA.

If you are spirit, fashioned like my love,  
Or are my love in truth, speak some sweet word  
To cheer this sink of death within my breast.  
Give to my heart a moment's throb of joy,  
Though it may hear reproaches in your voice.

HAFTHOR.

Could you betray me thus?  
Was there no worth in woman, power in charms,  
No fear of gods who hate a lie, to hold  
You faithful for a little time, though pledged  
Free-hearted to long love?

FENJA.

I thought you dead ;  
My hawk, you gave it me in youth, returned  
With woful token you were drowned.

HAFTHOR.

How so,  
When I despatched him fairly with good cheer?  
It is a woman's trick to first betray,  
Then brazen out her guilt with lies ! But now  
I had a thought to love you ; whereas now  
I waver 'twixt frail pity and despise.

FENJA.

The gods do know I speak the truth.

IVAR (*to* HAFTHOR).

And I !  
If death wait on this wound, it gives me joy  
To know I earned it doing harm to you.  
I plucked your jocund message from the wing,  
And feathered out your bird with my ill tale.

FENJA.

Oh, 't was a cruel thing indeed to do.

HAFTHOR.

But not more cruel than my doubt of you,  
Nor that I leave you humbled at my feet.  
This talisman?



FENJA.

That Ivar wrenched from me  
The wintry day you fled, and gave the king,  
Who wound it round, a consecrated gift  
To Baldur's sacred arm.

HAFTHOR (*taking FENJA in his arms*).

My fasting heart  
Will not be stayed by custom. Though a queen,  
And in the presence of your lord, my love  
Bids me awhile remember you are mine.  
[*Kisses her.*]

KING SWEND (*advancing*).

What is this juggle 'fore my eyes? Bold knave!  
Thy stripling sword shall answer my gray brand!

HAFTHOR.

Thine or any. Come! [*Calls.*] Denmark and  
revenge!

HAROLD.

Strike him to earth! profaner of the gods!  
[*Cries of "Denmark and Revenge."*]  
Strike, Ivar, strike! and, slaves, seize on yon girl!

HAFTHOR.

Denmark and revenge!

[ERIC springs to the side of HAFTHOR, and against them come SWEND, HAROLD, and IVAR. HAFTHOR continues to defend FENJA, winning his way with her. The other women exeunt with clamor. The Swedes and Norwegians turn and prepare for resistance. The Danes sweep on in overwhelming numbers. IVAR falls. HAROLD and SWEND, fighting, give way to the right, and the battle becomes general.

## Act Fourth.

SCENE. — *An interior, level with the ground. Conventional, with arched window above steps, left, through which FENJA views a portion of the battle. Several women up stage. GURTH sits one side disconsolately leaning on his harp. EYVIND moves about, upbraiding himself for the infirmities of age.*

EYVIND.

Age is the usury of youth, the foil  
Of circumstance, the sport of fate, the toy  
Of gods, the babbling folly of stale life.  
Here, when our country's chance is desperate,  
Do you and I with these frocked cattle whinny,  
No longer counted fit to herd with men!  
Counsels, forsooth! My only counsels once  
Were whisp and swash of sword, and flash of  
lance,  
And song of arrow darting from the bow!  
I am ashamed, old Gurth, to stroke the beard  
That danced behind my ears in other time,  
When none were swifter in the fight than I.

GURTH.

There is no poverty like memory  
Of worth that is no more. I, too —

EYVIND.

I know ;

We were in prime together. But, grown old,  
Our valiant deeds slip from the minds of men  
As frost-nipped leaves from trees. No fortune  
worse

That may befall a man than, once esteemed,  
To live for fools' contempt.

[*Enter* THORD.]

GURTH.

So have you not.

EYVIND.

I do despise myself ; and who would that,  
But is a fool? Ah, good, brave lad ! What news?  
How run affairs, and who holds best the odds?  
Be brief and quick to tell me. Do you bleed?

THORD.

I have no hurt, yet wonder I escaped,  
Who am so young in battle and engaged  
So many practised arms. I cannot say  
With whom the tide of favor runs, and yet  
I fear 't is not with us. The very earth  
Seems teeming with these Danes, so thick they  
swarm.

They swept upon our ranks as they had been  
The beating billows of an angry sea,  
And left the valley and the mountain side  
Strewn with the bloody corpses of their foes.

EYVIND.

That were a sight to see though eyes were old !  
What do you from the midst ?

THORD.

There is a truce  
That both the armies have an hour declared ;  
Which time I have employed, though losing hope,  
In quest to learn if Eysa lives unharmed.  
I could not fight were she perchance cut off ;  
I could not cease to fight were she enslaved !

EYVIND.

She is not here.

THORD.

I'll seek her elsewhere, then.

[*Enter HAFTHOR, conducting FENJA. THORD and HAFTHOR draw swords and stand for a moment confronted. Then THORD thrusts back his sword. HAFTHOR follows his example.*

THORD.

If all the Danes were Hafthor, and in him  
Were centred all of Norway's foes, my hand  
Would lack the heart to strike the rightful blow.

HAFTHOR.

And were all foes to Hafthor like to Thord  
Thus would he haste to play the enemy.

[HAFTHOR holds open his arms. They embrace.  
FENJA crosses behind HAFTHOR and THORD to  
EYVIND, who kisses her forehead. GURTH comes  
humbly forward and kisses the hand FENJA ex-  
tends to him.

HAFTHOR.

Sweet custom made us friends, not ill chance  
foes.

I thought the rivers of my eyes were dry ;  
But through the mist that dear affection breeds  
I see you fondly, — though in truth, this dew  
Is rather more the tempering of love  
Than friendship's tribute. Here 's the gentle  
spring. [Pointing to FENJA.

THORD.

And how much happier she glows than when,  
Myself more glad than now, I saw her last.  
[To FENJA.] I wed for joy, you for a taste of  
woe ;  
But in the issue these were changed, for now  
You smile and I — I only cannot weep.

EYVIND (to HAFTHOR).

Welcome, my dear, sweet lord !

HAFTHOR.

Well met, Eyvind !

FENJA (*to* THORD).

You see before you where my woe found smiles.  
Where lies the secret of your grief?

THORD.

With her,

Wherever Eysa is. For since the morn  
When rude alarm of war infringed the bliss  
That your persuasion led her to bestow,  
Mischance, or — what I die but thinking on —  
Foul lot, has wrenched her from me.

HAFTHOR.

Take cheer, then ;

Trim your brows to gladness, let your dulled eyes  
Dance with young merriment, — for she is safe !

THORD.

You know, then, where she is?

FENJA.

She might be found.

THORD.

I pray you tell me where !

HAFTHOR.

Why, look you, now,

How wild of patience is this youth, whose arms  
Have hardly clipt his dearest friend, yet would,  
Though we who part may part for time, extend  
To clasp some truant girl !

THORD.

Nay, mock me not,  
 For though I've missed her but an afternoon,  
 My heavy fears have made it seem an age.

FENJA.

Go seek her, then, where she, as sad for you,  
 Strains tear-foiled vision in the hope to spy  
 Her lord among the surging mass. Her stand  
 Is by that hillock-thronèd oak —

THORD.

I know —

[*Pausing, to HAFTHOR.*] And yet, now that my  
 doubts are happily flown,  
 I cannot go before my constant hand  
 Has felt again the pressure of your own,  
 Since, as you say, though I hope better things,  
 This parting may be our good-by for time!

HAFTHOR (*hand on heart*).

I will not loose some thoughts lie pleading here,  
 That well might pass 'twixt friends in lazy hours,  
 But which are over-tender, much too fond  
 For stirring times like these. Farewell! Fare-  
 well!

And if the god of war, best knowing best,  
 Set seal upon your life or mine, who lives  
 Will know he lost a friend, — a rooted friend,  
 Worth half the pangs of life to win.



EYVIND (*to FENJA*).

Sweet niece,  
This snowy hand that lies within my grasp  
Is cold and shudders.

THORD (*to HAFTHOR*).

You have said my speech.

FENJA (*to EYVIND*).

His words have chilled my heart forebodingly.

EYVIND.

Tush ! shall we then hang death on sentiments ?

THORD (*to HAFTHOR*).

Note how my tongue does falter from my will,  
And cheat my inward longing. Read my thought  
In what my hand imparts. Again, farewell !  
And if we meet in combat —

HAFTHOR.

If we do,  
Our swords shall be as loyal as our hearts,  
Nor touch with kisses in false blows. Farewell !  
We must be soldiers in contempt of hearts.

THORD.

Farewell ! And you, my friends ! [*Offering hand.*]

FENJA.

Farewell, brave Thord !

EYVIND.

Gods grant I may not see this ruddy face  
Too pale, though scars and wounds are monuments.

THORD (*going*).

A viking dreads not death. Farewell to all !  
[*Exit hurriedly.*]

GURTH (*to HAFTHOR*).

Do you remember me, young sir !

HAFTHOR.

In heart,  
Old minstrel, not less truly than in mind.  
Have I not played with you o' summer nights  
When nature quit her hum of life to hear ;  
Or, idling where the wintry logs blazed bright,  
Caught from your skilful fingers some new trick ?  
I do remember you, and thinking so,  
Miss what I was.

GURTH.

Then you remember, too,  
The stars were books to me from which I drew  
The curious wonderment of things to come, —  
Though you alone of all who listened me  
Believed I read aright.

HAFTHOR.

You told some truths  
That stood their timeful testing.

GURTH (*kneeling*).

Rive my tongue,  
That I may gibber without power of words  
To give my thought expression, for last night  
I read an omen. Would I had been blind  
Before my eyes were lifted up!

HAFTHOR.

Say on.

What was 't you saw?

GURTH.

That selfsame shining spot  
Which stood among the wastes of night for you,  
Flamed with a sudden splendor, then went out,  
Suiting its office to the sullen gloom;  
A sign I have observed these three-score years,  
When one in prime should die by violence!

EYVIND.

What! Turned raven in your last babyhood,  
Croaking the visions seen in drunken sleep?  
Out upon you! I thought you better framed!

HAFTHOR.

Not so roughly, Eyvind. Kindly hand him.  
But look again, old Gurth, and see  
My star as bright as ever yet it shone.

GURTH (*sadly*).

'T will shine, indeed, but redder than before.

EYVIND.

Away! I'll set you down to barter dreams  
Among these telltale women.

FENJA (*to HAFTHOR*).

Oh, my love! —

Though not my lord in custom, — heed his words;  
They are not echoes from an empty house,  
For there is knocking at my jealous breast  
Still gives them confirmation. Go not forth  
To tempt again the fury of the fight  
From which you now have 'scaped with hardy zeal.  
The rather come with me to Odin's shrine,  
Where we together kneeling will implore  
The pardon of high Asgard. Pray you, do.  
The gods are angry for the impious act  
Whereby you did offence to Baldur. Come.  
There safety dwells for you; for me, content.

[GURTH, *sitting on low stool, the women around  
him, plays softly.*

HAFTHOR.

And do you, Fenja, counsel me to play  
The coward's part, to hide a craven head  
That fears to brook the frown it raised? No, girl.  
I think the mighty gods live not in stone  
More than in man, and find their best delights  
In valiant doings and in loyal hearts.  
Great Odin's self, before he was a god,  
Performed a hero's work, and so became

The chief divinity of fearless men.  
He would not pardon me afraid, nor yet  
Would you esteem me trembling for my life.  
Though bound to you by every tender tie,  
New pledged to you with every healthful throb,  
My heart beats more for honor than for love,  
And follows duty though she lead to death !

## FENJA.

Is there no honor but the bruit of arms?  
Is there no duty but to slay your foes?  
Are there no other gods than wrathful Tyr?  
I know you brave, for I have seen you brave ;  
I know you loyal, for you 've proved yourself.  
But I would see you tender, merciful,  
Holding for me the life that is my own, —  
For on your life my life depends. Speak not ;  
What dwells in woman's soul the thought of man,  
Though aged in wisdom, cannot penetrate.  
Love feeds in man on passion, valor, pride, —  
He loves not what he cannot boast to love ;  
But love in woman is her very life, —  
The breath of morning and the dews of night, —  
And when she loves despairing of her love,  
Like flowers bereft of nourishment she droops,  
Pales in her isolation, and expires !  
You gave yourself to me when I, a girl,  
Had but a truant slight esteem of love ;  
But since my woman's heart has suffered grief,  
And levity been purged away with tears,

I see with knowing eyes where lies my strength,  
And as a vested right I claim from you  
The fortune of that life wherein I live !

EVVIND (*aside to GURTH*).

I go to steal a look abroad. Stay you. [*Exit.*]

HAFTHOR.

Man lives for good of man, not self-delight !  
I know it was for you I did exchange  
The grateful harp to grasp revengeful sword.  
I feel beneath my corselet there abides  
More willingness to love than wish to fight ;  
But rule of tranquil days concerns not war,  
And though my soul may linger where you are,  
Myself must face the field. Ah, droop not so !  
Think not my heart is harder than it is.  
If I might step among Walhalla's host  
Of mighty men whom time has snatched from  
earth,  
And be the chief of that most grand array,  
I'd not, so much I prize you more than fame,  
Secure that glory, should I so lose you.  
But mortal honor is a thing so chaste  
It may not glance aside without a stain.  
The recreant crawls on the scorn of time,  
Not more despised than by himself abhorred.  
Would proud and loyal Fenja stoop to love  
A soldier who lacked honor to be true ?

FENJA.

I am not versed in art to answer you ;  
I only know I love, and to my love  
Would sacrifice all else of relished life.  
Are you so cold because the envied prize  
Was easier won than you had thought 't would be?  
Have I lost zest since by the lot of war  
You may proclaim me slave —

HAFTHOR (*interrupting*).

Most cruel thought !  
Most unkind Fenja, so to speak ! Nay, sweet ;  
I will be what you will. Control my course.

[*Throws sword on couch.*]

I'll fling away my father's sword, and we,  
Turning our backs upon the peopled world,  
Will seek some corner of the earth where love  
May thrive in secret, unabashed by thought  
That where men swarm my name is coupled close  
With most extreme disdain. What will we care  
How men will think when we have quit their  
haunts !

FENJA.

You mock me.

HAFTHOR.

No, I mock you not. I yield.  
I take you at your word that love is all.

[*Enter EYVIND hurriedly.*]

We will lay down our honor and our pride, —  
For they are things put on to please the world.

[HAFTHOR *extends hand and offers to go.* FENJA,  
*unheeding, looks upon the ground.*

EYVIND (*excitedly*).

You have much overstayed your time, young sir.  
The truce is over and the fight renewed;  
And like the leaping billows of the main  
Raging before the wind, they roll this way,  
Both armies intermingled.

[*After a momentary excitement, HAFTHOR is calm,*  
*GURTH and the women confused.*

HAFTHOR (*taking FENJA's hand*).

Peace, old man;  
You babble things that were. My weary soul  
Pines for repose from doing.

EYVIND.

What, not fight!  
Not put your sword and sinews to their proof!  
Incredible to think, does Hafthor fear?

FENJA (*to HAFTHOR, moving to couch and taking  
up sword.*)

Go forth. Love is not all. They who are true  
Must honor where they love.

[*Giving sword to Hafthor.*



HAFTHOR.

Now, by my sword!  
Am I repaid for all my faith in you.  
I knew you what you are, proud, noble, true!  
I'll live to thank you for this act. Farewell!  
[*Kisses FENJA and exit hurriedly.*]

EYVIND.

Be not too lavish with your kisses, Niece;  
'T is not so certain how 't will end, and you,  
Unless young Hafthor holds you with his brand,  
Are bride to Sweden's lord.

FENJA.

Sir, do you think  
For what I did believing Hafthor dead,  
I will estate me, knowing that he lives?  
Hafthor's my lord, however fares the fight;  
Or if he be not —

EYVIND.

Well, what else? Have care.  
Lose not your brother from your count.

FENJA (*showing dagger*).

Nor this!

EYVIND.

A most unsightly thing in woman's hand.  
Give 't me.

FENJA.

Not yet. My true love's proctor this,  
'Gainst which not even brothers may command.

EYSA (*entering hurriedly*).

Oh, my darling lady! [*Embracing.*]

FENJA.

Sweet sister! You weep!  
What evil fortune do these tears forerun?

EYSA.

We are undone by these most savage Danes,  
'Fore whom our vikings disappear as grass  
Before the browsing herd. They're all in flight,  
And as they run the foe smites them with death.

FENJA (*aside*).

Horrible! And my accusing terror  
Lays the blame upon my wilful soul.

EYVIND (*at window*).

Gods!

It is a fearful thing to see.

EYSA (*to FENJA*).

Go look,  
If you would have your eyes like mine, weep  
blood!

FENJA.

Though nature sicken at the sight, I'll look.

EYVIND (*descending*).

Nay, do not so.

FENJA.

Deny me not. My will  
Is stronger than my fears. Lend me your hand.  
[*Takes EYVIND's hand and mounts steps to window.*  
EYVIND stands beside her. FENJA looks a moment in silence.

EYSA.

This day fills up the woe of Norway quite.  
Would I were underneath their rushing feet,  
If so I might find Thord!

EYVIND (*to FENJA*).

You shake with fear.  
I pray you be advised; there's danger there.  
Descend into the room.

FENJA (*looking out*).

My veins are chilled  
With the cold horror of the bloody scene.  
Nor can my startled eyes give shape to men,  
Massed like some writhing monster self-destroyed!  
I know not which are friends, so close impact  
Are slayers and the slain. There is a break!

The moving bulk has stopped. Those in retreat  
Have turned to fight as though they do despair  
Of safe escape, and mean to sell their lives  
At dearest price. They gain some backward way!  
But now they're forced again! I see the plume  
My brother wears. 'T is he! he strives to check  
The tide of fell disaster. Ne'er till now  
Have I beheld him kingly; but he towers  
Majestic where he fights. Oh, gods, what now!  
One comes against him that I know. Yes, 't is, —  
'T is Hafthor's self encounters him full tide!  
Such stroke of swords! I am afraid to look,  
But dare not else. So noble both appear,  
And yet so deadly fearful, friend and foe  
Stand locked from action, wondering to see  
Their mighty leaders so engaged! Oh, gods!  
Is Hafthor fallen so? He's up again  
And lays such rapid blows his shining sword  
Is like a halo in the sun. Look now!  
My brother yields, his strength declines, his sword  
Strikes heavily and slow; he stumbles, falls.  
Oh, spare him, Hafthor! put him not to death!  
He holds his sword aloft! The gods be thanked,  
He lets my brother live! They bind him fast;  
And over all there is a sudden hush, —  
A deathlike stillness, as the fight were done.  
But there's old Swend, who was my purchased lord,  
Steps forth and fits an arrow to his bow.  
[Turning.] Eysa, mount with me; there is no  
terror now.

Peace has come. [*Cries out and falls.*] 'T was Swend!

[FENJA falls into the arms of EYVIND, who takes in his hands the shaft of an arrow snatched from her breast. FENJA is borne to couch, EYSA and the women gathering around her.]

EYSA.

In holy ruth  
Inform me what has chanced! Darling Fenja!  
If she be in swoon— What! Look you! She  
bleeds!  
Oh! Came that arrow from her breast? Sweet  
girl!

[EYSA kneels down by FENJA.]

EYVIND.

Speak to me, Fenja, for I quake to see  
The lily wonder of your skin so stained;  
You are not but a little hurt? No worse?

FENJA.

I think it touched the core of life! Ah, me!  
I did not hope to die; but death were good  
Did it withhold till I might speak with him,  
And feel his lips—his look—his touch—

EYVIND.

She faints.  
Guard her full tenderly. Stanch close the wound.  
I'll look beyond for medicines. [*Exit, left.*]

EYSA.

Dear friend,  
Most darling lady, look not so composed,  
The very counterpart of what we fear.  
There is no tremor of her heart. I doubt  
If any wistful spark of life remain.

[*Bows, weeping.*

[*The women surround, concealing couch. Enter HAFTHOR with drawn sword, followed by ERIC, guarding HAROLD bound, THORD, and several others. HAFTHOR goes to throne chair, which he mounts, smiting the top with his sword.*

HAFTHOR.

In Denmark's name, and for great Denmark's  
king,  
I seize on Norway as the prize of arms.  
And, for I know him faithful, capable,  
I name, till such good time as Denmark speaks,  
Young Thord of Norway to be Norway's jarl.  
Kneel you, and you who late were Norway's king.  
[*They kneel. HAFTHOR touches sword to the head of HAROLD, then to THORD's.*

HAFTHOR.

Thus passes majesty from one to one  
As lightly as we breathe a sigh. Arise!

FENJA.

Hafthor!

HAFTHOR.

Who calls so faintly on my name?

[*The women move apart, revealing couch and EYSA kneeling beside FENJA.*

FENJA.

Hafthor!

HAFTHOR.

Gods! Am I turned to ice within,  
That I am struck so cold at heart?

FENJA.

Hafthor!

[*EYSA rises, and HAFTHOR hastens to take place, kneeling beside FENJA. EYSA goes tearfully to THORD, and flings herself upon his breast. HAROLD comes quickly and takes place behind couch.*

HAFTHOR.

Most precious to my heart, how came this hurt?  
What cruel fortune touched you thus? You smile!  
Then may my soul drink hope from your wreathed  
lips.

FENJA.

I did but wait your coming that my life  
Might leap into our parting kiss. Your lips.

[*HAFTHOR kisses her. EYVIND re-enters.*

HAROLD.

My little sister, speak to me.

[ERIC cuts his cords.

FENJA.

That voice —

More tender than it ever spoke. Good-night, —

[Giving her hand to HAROLD.

For there is darkness round about me now.

Hafthor, Harold, lead me forth.

[She dies. HAFTHOR and HAROLD kneel on either side, each holding one of her hands.

HAROLD (*after a pause*).

She is dead.

[HAFTHOR kisses her brow and rises. HAROLD continues kneeling. EYVIND, showing grief and as if sorely stricken, comes forward and takes the place vacated by HAFTHOR.

HAFTHOR (*aside*).Shall I, who conquered Norway for her sake,  
Now live without her? Yet I may not yield  
To self-inflicted death without some shame.

[Suddenly.] Ay! there's a way. [To HAROLD.]

You need not be a slave,  
The sport and plaything of a foreign king, —  
For we were friends in youth — Nay, truth to say,  
For that I loved your sister, — ah, how well! —  
I would not have it so. Take chance with sword  
To gain the liberty you crave.



HAROLD.

How so?

HAFTHOR.

We two will fight in equal combat here ;  
And if the god of fortune smile on you,  
Upon my troth you shall be free to go  
Whither your humbled hopes may lead.

HAROLD.

It is a noble offer. Let my sword  
Speak better than my tongue my thanks. My  
sword !

[THORD *hands his sword to HAROLD. HAFTHOR and HAROLD take position. THORD and ERIC stand near. EYSA slips around back of couch, kisses FENJA, and then watches to see the combat. EYVIND remains bowed, paying no heed. GURTH takes place near front with harp in front of him. After a pass or two, HAFTHOR lets fall his guard just as HAROLD makes a thrust, receiving HAROLD's sword in his breast.*

THORD (*starting forward*).

That was an unresisted stroke.

HAFTHOR (*smiling*).

Well struck.

Your arm has strength.

HAROLD.

I understand you now.  
You tricked me to your death. It was not just.  
[THORD *half supports* HAFTHOR, *who wavers, but remains standing.* GURTH *half unconsciously touches his harp, playing.* EYVIND, *dumb-founded, arises and goes back of couch.*

HAFTHOR.

You scorned to give her to me when glad life  
Was sportive in her dimpled cheeks ; but now  
Amend the wrong, and I will happier die  
Than ever in most joyous hour I lived.  
[*Struggles an instant, then clasps his hand to his side, and recovers.*  
My tawny ship lies there among the fleet,  
A golden dragon at her head. She came,  
My father told me, from the unknown sea,  
Full sailed to court the breeze, and yet unmanned ;  
Her spacious deck uncumbered, and her hold  
Unlined with trace of any former life.  
He first beheld her in the summer light  
That marked the mid-day calm, — the sea serene  
As face of sleeping pool ; yet on she moved,  
A thing of beauty and of life. A space,  
And from the prow there seemed to rise a flame  
That spread its arms and caught the sails and  
mast,  
And wrapped the vessel in a yellow cloak.

Whereat my father sighed that craft so fair  
Should burn, thinking it the funeral bed  
Of some departed king. But, as he gazed,  
The yellow flame, as though an orb of light,  
Rolled from the ship into a ball of fire  
That fled along the surface of the sea ;  
Then, cleft in twain, it rose into the sky,  
As 't were two images, a man and maid,  
And vanished where the overhanging blue  
Shuts in the fields of Asgard. All amazed,  
My father turned from looking, and behold !  
The ship lay moored before him. Such the tale.  
I think I read the omen in my fate ;  
And if I lie with this fair hapless maid  
Upon the mystic deck, my ship again  
Will sail into the unknown waiting sea,  
Where our two souls entwining will ascend  
Into the region of the gods. Do this ;  
Let our asundered lives unite in death,  
And all will be forgiven. [Dies.

THE END.















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